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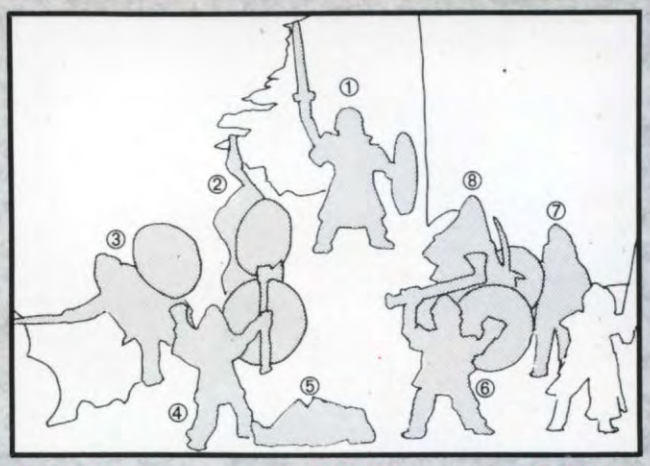

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"'Ere, Cockburn, why don't you - ''
Not now, kid, I've got this editorial to write.
Fresh home in the Chaos-carpeted vaults of the WD editorial office, I've been thinking about all the ''Why don't you..." questions we were asked by discerning citizens at *Games Day*, the annual jamboree in London where gamers from all over the country gather to meet the famous, the infamous and to find out all about their favourite games, and why no-one has brought them out yet. It looks like there is no end to the demand for new games, and to the potential for new games, and to the new games that someone is working on *somewhere*... And that's going to make life even harder for we poor, overworked WD slaves, as we try to find space for them all. Ho hum. Well, just to cut back on the tailback a little, we're going to push a small prezzie your way next month - a bigger Dwarf! Yep, eight extra pages for the same price, and not just extra advertising either. Amazin'. Now then, where did that kid with the *Dogtanian rpg* go??

Paul Cockburn

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OPEN BOX

D&D SET 5: IMMORTALS RULES

Roleplaying Rules Supplement
TSR Inc £9.95

And finally... the culmination of the D&D game system! The **D&D Immortals Rules** come in the form of two booklets, one for players and one for the DM, and deal with those adventurers who have successfully followed the courses laid out in the Master Rules for attaining immortality.

I must admit that I had my doubts when I opened the box. Super-powerful characters have never excited me particularly, since there is always the threat of grossness leading to a breakdown in game balance. *Immortals* seems like a different game when you first look at it - professions are replaced by spheres, levels are replaced by Immortal ranks, and experience points do not relate directly to character progression, but form the basis of a power point system.

As I read onwards, though, I came to the conclusion that this is not a bad thing at all. In effect, it *is* a different game; it needs to be, and the changes in the *Immortals* rules are far preferable to the super-gross AD&D-style rules stretch that could have happened.

On to specifics. Much of the basic D&D mechanics are unchanged, despite the radically different feel of the *Immortals* rules, but the most important addition is the system of Power Points. On achieving immortality, a character trades in all his/her Experience Points for Power Points, and they are the basic currency underlying all Immortal actions. 10,000 Experience Points give 1 Power Point, and Power Points can be expended permanently to enhance the character's attributes, as well as forming a 'magic point' system to fuel the character's new-found range of special abilities. Players need to be careful when considering attribute boosts, or there won't be enough Power Points left for the abilities.

Combat and magic are both expanded to take the new Immortal powers into account, and from what I've heard from US playtests combat between Immortals generally comes down to pure psionic combat using the powers; a character who drops his/her Anti-Magic long enough to cast a spell will normally get fried by incoming magical attacks, and Immortals rarely get close enough to slug it out physically.

Advancement through the various levels, or Ranks, of Immortality is covered, and is again slightly different from normal D&D character advancement. As I mentioned before, 10,000 Experience Points make up 1 Power Point, and the requirements to advance in Rank vary from 1,000 to 10,000 Power Points - 10 million to 100 million Experience Points. In order to maintain rank, the Immortal must keep a 'credit balance' of enough Power Points, balancing this against permanent expenditure on attribute boosts and temporary expenditure on special abilities. Progression from one Rank to the next is not automatic - having accumulated enough Power Points, the Immortal character must compete in the Olympics (honestly!) pertaining to his/her own sphere in order to gain promotion to the next Rank.

The D&D Multiverse system is expanded, now that characters will be traipsing hither and yon through it on a regular basis. As in AD&D, the Astral Plane permeates and connects the whole of the Multiverse, but the system of planes is much more open and less regulated than in AD&D. Astral magic, movement and encounters are all covered, and - a nice touch, this - the encounter table has a blank column for your own d100 ranges, alongside those suggested by the designer. There is a new selection of jargon to deal with concerning plane sizes - they can vary from the Attoplane (one-third of an inch across) through the Standard Plane (a dinky 0.85 light-years across) to the Teraplane (851 billion light-years across), and stars and planets vary in size accordingly.

A great deal is said about creating and maintaining physical forms - the Immortal can have any number of forms, but creating and maintaining them is yet another drain on the old cosmic bank balance of Power Points. Avatars are also covered - they have a lot of potential, but are correspondingly expensive.

For the DM, there are useful notes on Immortal campaigns, covering the goals of Immortal characters, their place within Immortal society, and their duties and responsibilities. The DM is encouraged to play the roles of the Immortals' superiors - the Hierarchs of each Sphere - keeping them in line and maintaining game balance. There is a useful section on Immortal Justice, which shows the DM how to deal with irresponsible characters and avoid grossouts - one of my main worries about Immortal characters.

Finally, there are sample plots for Immortal adventures, and 22 pages of suitably powerful monsters, including a range of demons which will look strangely familiar to anyone who has read the *AD&D Monster Manual*. They've come full circle, really, since most of them first saw the light of day in the original D&D supplement *Eldritch Wizardry*, if my memory serves me correctly.

All in all, I found the *Immortals Set* interesting. I can't imagine ever *playing* it, but it provides just about everything necessary for dealing with characters who have worked their way up through the mortal levels and attained immortality. There is a real feeling of having gone on to greater things, and the considerable powers which the Immortal character commands are nicely offset by checks and balances which the experienced DM can use to avoid critical over-the-top-ism in most circumstances. The expansion of the D&D cosmology could be useful for campaigns at mortal levels as well, and the new monsters can also be used (with care!) for mortal adventures.

Not an indispensable addition to the D&D stable, but an interesting and well-thought-out one. Completists won't want to miss it, and DMs of high-level mortal campaigns will find some of the information it contains interesting.

Graeme Davis

THE WARLOCK OF FIRETOP MOUNTAIN

SPAWN OF AZATHOTH

MIDDLE EARTH ROLEPLAYING (2nd US Edition)

Roleplaying Game Rules
Iron Crown Enterprises £9.95

Fantasy Boardgame
Games Workshop £12.95

All right, hands up how many of you thought Fighting Fantasy was for kids, eh? Yes, I thought so! Well, FF may be played by plenty of young people, but it's also an excellent way of introducing new gamers to the sophisticated and heady delights of our hobby. And if it wasn't for all those fresh young games enthusiasts introduced to roleplaying by the original *Warlock of Firetop Mountain* book, this hobby would be much smaller and far less interesting. This game is likely to be snapped up by rabid solo-gamers in their thousands, but I reckon it deserves more than a second look from us too.

The Warlock of Firetop Mountain boardgame is very roughly based upon the original premise of the solo gamebook, which I'm sure is owned by more of you than would care to admit. The evil archmage Zagor has secreted himself away in his dungeon, and you are a brave and fearless warrior who intends reclaiming all his loot. However, in the game, you are just one of six adventurers exploring the subterranean passages and rooms. Whether you co-operate or fight each other is up to you, but it's usually a combination of both that wins the game.

Scattered around this dungeon, guarded by the usual array of monsters and traps, are all kinds of treasures. The ones you want, though, are the bunches of keys which may help you open old Zagor's treasure chest. Every time you find some keys you are allowed to make what's called a Key Challenge, which operates very much like the system of clues in *Cluedo*. You say, for example, 'I believe that one of the keys to Zagor's chest has the number 6 on it.' Everyone shows you one of their own keys - if no-one shows you the 6 you can be certain that it's the key to the chest!

Of course, once you know what keys open the chest, your adventurer then has to get there in one piece, with the relevant keys picked up from around the dungeon, negotiate the Maze, and knock off Zagor and his guardians! There's nothing simple or childish about this game! It requires deduction, determination, some skill, and quite a bit of luck to get all the way to the end without losing your character.

Production quality on the game is up to GW's increasingly excellent standards, with fairly clear rules and some very pretty pieces. The board is very nice, though unclear in places (this is sorted out in examples in the rulebook, but surely it would have been easier to produce a clearer board in the first place?). I have very few other niggles about the game: it could have done with some zip-lock bags to keep the pressed-out pieces in, and I still can't see why the six supposedly-identical adventurers include a dwarf, elf, cleric and wizard, together with two proper warriors. Still, that's nothing to get steamed up about. On the whole this game is very neat and stylish, and deserves to do well. The slight resemblance to *Cluedo* is actually no bad thing, as it adds a degree of depth that most dungeon-bashing boardgames have never had. *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* is the sort of boardgame I'd probably buy for my little brother and end up playing myself!

Robert Neville

Call of Cthulhu Adventure
Chaosium £15.95

At the centre of the universe dances the blind idiot god Azathoth. From its body it casts off small starlike objects which hurtle through space forever. But not all of its spawn are destined to travel endlessly through the void, some enter into inhabited solar systems which they have the power to change irrecoverably. But in downtown Providence it is life as normal, or it it? Strange goings take place, a headless body makes a surprise midnight visit to an unsuspecting investigator and the mystery begins.

Spawn of Azathoth is the latest boxed for *Call of Cthulhu* and gets off to nicely horrific start. Following a trail of clues, the intrepid investigators journey around the world uncovering sanity blasting horrors and trying to avert a world threatening disaster. *Spawn* certainly has its fair shair highlights - there is more than enough horror here to send even the most hardened investigator insane, and lots of good detective work is called for to piece the story together. Apart for the opening and ending adventures the remainder are playable in any order, allowing the invetigators some measure of freedom over the course of the adventure. As an added bonus, it even includes a couple of excursions into the magical realms of the *Dreamlands*, but it is playable without that supplement.

Spawn of Azathoth also includes a number of excerpts from mythos books, rather than just notes as to what they contain. This greatly adds to the atmosphere and flavour of the game. Insane insights are also provided to be given out at suitable times - a nice touch these as they are directly related to the story and also humourous.

However, unlike the weighty *Masks of Nyaralathotep*, this package seems a little lonely in its box. On reading through I got the definite impression that this was a standard booklet size adventure padded out to fit into a box - and even then some useful pieces of information seem to have been overlooked. There are three books inside the box, but the first book doesn't start until page 8, even with 7 pages given over for the contents, title page and the obligatory picture of H.P. Lovecraft, there is a lot of empty space before the adventure begins - an awfully big chunk out of a 32 page book.

Presentation of a few of the adventures is also very sketchy in places, resembling author's notes rather than a polished roleplaying product. There are NPCs by the score, but little advice on how to play them or structure their arrival. As for one scene, it is highly unlikely the PCs will ever uncover it the way it is written - a clue as to its whereabouts would have been very useful here.

Having read *Spawn of Azathoth* I came away feeling that although it had some nice ideas in there, it had not been developed as much as could have been. While the overall plot is good and most of its component adventures are interesting, it lacks the vital 'Oommph' which would have made it a classic adventure...

Peter Green

First there was the **MERP** booklet produced by ICE which developed the idea of playing adventures in JRR Tolkien's world of Middle-earth. Games Workshop in the UK improved on the 1st Edition by boxing it and including cardboard figures, map sheets, and so on. Now ICE have improved again on the 1st Edition by replacing the dubious 'purple orcs' artwork of the GW box and strategically re-arranging the rulebook - but most importantly by including a proper introduction booklet.

ICE are demonstrating the same determined effort to attract newcomers to the hobby as Chaosium did with the inclusion of *Basic RolePlaying* in *RuneQuest*. The 32-page 'Introduction to Fantasy Role-Playing' booklet that comes with *MERP* is exactly that. It starts with a simple adaptation of a system already in existence: ICE's *QuestGame* used for their solo gamebooks. A short solo adventure is used to demonstrate various facets of roleplaying, adventures, characters and the 'feel' or roleplaying games - particularly in the way *MERP* puts over the flavour of Tolkien's world.

The use of a solo adventure (which can also be run by a GM for a single player) is both novel and helpful and, apart from the dialogue, well written. It is followed up with an additional party adventure using the full *MERP* rules. Six pregenerated characters are provided for instant play and the adventure is intriguing and well designed.

Throughout the introductory booklet helpful notes and explanatory asides are included to tell the novice and inexperienced roleplayer what terms mean, how rules can be used and why various conventions are adopted to ease play. *MERP* bills itself heavily as a game based on the idea of a 'living novel' and follows this philosophy accurately; it is a game which despite having a parentage rooted in '70s rpgs (*D&D* et al) still manages to adhere to the narrative approach. New players will certainly be encouraged in this direction by the new starter adventure as well as by those included in modules for *MERP* already released by ICE. The introductory material will also help GMs who wish to design their own adventures and create additional in the supplementary campaign material already available.

2nd Edition *MERP* remains the same game, just re-edited and rearranged somewhat. Much of the old confusion of tables, lists and rules has been cleared by a sensible grouping of charts onto single pages and into a larger batch on the rear of the book. Hopefully new players will find the organisation a lot more satisfactory than the old. Along with this, there is more artwork, including a number of character sketches by Angus McBride, ICE's current favourite artist.

The rules, basically unchanged, will (as with any system) either appeal or not. Newly included are notes on roleplaying in Middle-earth using other systems: *RoleMaster*, the game from which *MERP* was developed; and *Fantasy Hero*, ICE's third roleplaying system recently acquired on the demise of Hero Games. Other additions to the rules book itself include a handy index and extra illustrations for the sample adventure.

There are a few ommisions and less good asects of this new package. The two hideous twenty side dice and minute and unreadable. The cardboard characters are not as well produced as in the GW boxed set. The rules also fail to incorporate much new information devised for supplements written since the 1st Edition, which is a pity.

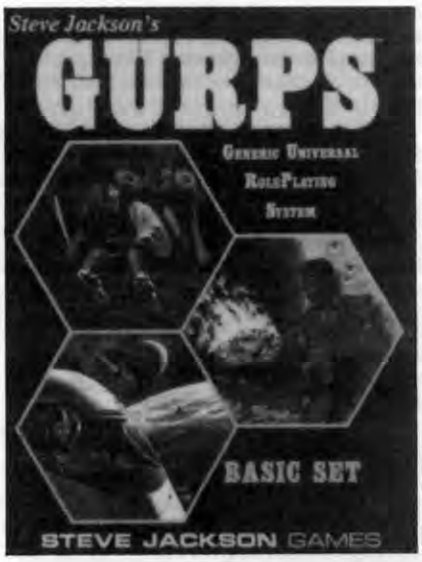
Overall, ICE have opted not to produce a new game, but to upgrade the production values of *MERP* as it existed. This they have achieved, and *MERP* remains (for me) one of the more inventive and enjoyable roleplaying games currently available. Its background is certainly as deep as any other, surpassed only by those set in our own world. If you haven't yet got *MERP*, now must be the time to try it!

Graham Staplehurst

OPEN BOX

GURPS - GENERIC UNIVERSAL ROLEPLAYING SYSTEM BASIC SET

Roleplaying Game
Steve Jackson Games £14.95



Sometimes it's difficult to learn new rules when you buy a game. Several manufacturers have tried to avoid this problem by making each new system compatible with previous products. Chaosium's *Basic RolePlaying* is the most famous example: originally intended for fantasy systems, it's now also used for superheroes, SF, horror and other genres. Palladium and Hero Games have also tried to retain this sort of compatibility. The snag is that this 'add-on' approach tends to add complexity whenever there's a new addition to the system, with the intended compatibility gradually lost as rules drift further and further apart.

GURPS is an ambitious attempt to design a system which will be compatible, as originally designed, for every genre known. To avoid making the rules 500 pages long, the system is sold as the basic game (covering general character creation and game mechanics) plus a series of specialised modules. Each module will devlop rules for one type of rpg; the first is *Man to Man*, an expansion of the combat system, mainly intended for fantasy adventures, but a supplement containing rules for magic seems likely to be next.

The game system resembles a streamlined and simplified version of the *Champions/Hero System* rules. The rules are explained in the main body of the text, while side paragraphs give examples and mention special cases that change rule effects. Characters spend points to modify four characteristics, and buy background, personal abilities and skills. The rules allow characters to get extra points by taking various disadvantages, from familiar the 'dependent NPCs' and 'hunted' to 'low status' (does anyone really want to start their career as a slave?), ugliness, and odious personal habits. All skill use and combat requires a 3d6 die roll against abilities. Combat is a little complicated, involving a lot of skills and manoeuvres, plus many optional rules. It probably won't suit beginners.

In all, there are nearly 200 pages of information in the game, including two rule books, a scenario book and some charts and tables. Although the rules occasionally mention technology, the scenarios and nearly all the examples seem to be in terms of a curiously colourless fantasy setting, without magic or monsters. This lack of colour may be *GURPS'* main weakness; in trying to be useful for every type of campiagn, it's somehow lost much of the believability of other systems. It's worth remembering that the two most successful cross-genre rules systems began with successful games: *Basic RolePlaying* was derived from *RuneQuest* and the *Hero System* from *Champions*. These systems had a solid base of loyal players, who were prepared to follow the rules changes needed for each new genre. By comparison, *GURPS* is trying to begin with a set of generic rules, then develop backgrounds as the game expands. In consequence, buyers of the basic *GURPS* rules will probably find that they need at least one supplement before they can run adventures in the genre they prefer.

While I can applaud the idea behind the system, I can't really recommend *GURPS* at its present stage of development. In the long run, *GURPS* and all its supplements may cover more ground than other systems, possibly at less expense, but in the short term there isn't enough support material to run a fully rounded game of any type, apart from gladiatorial combat and medieval adventures.

Marcus L Rowland

MIDNIGHT AT THE WELL OF SOULS

Roleplaying Game
TAG Industries £12.95

Seems like everywhere you turn nowadays, you fall over some literature-based roleplaying game - some are good, and some aren't. This particular specimen, based on the *Well World* books by Jack Chalker, tends towards the latter.

The contents listing sounds quite impressive - a 112-page rule book, introductory scenario, dice, a map of the Well World, combat charts, starship blueprints and all in a sturdy box. Wonderful. Except...

For a start, production is adequate - it's good quality paper, starightforward narrative, and surprisingly free from typos (bigger companies take note!). The real fun starts when you starts when you begin reading - it suggests you find 2 to 10 or *more* players (!?) for one thing, which makes me shudder with its implied chaos. Character generation is simple, with five basic and three derived attributes, and a *Call of Cthulhu*-style skills system in which a character divides a certain number of points, determined by his age, amongst whichever skills he wants. These are measured in percentage terms. Most (if not all) of the skills seem to have been culled from the pages of *Traveller* and *Ringworld* not direct quotes, but close enough to smell strongly of these rpgs. Other sections of the text are also familiar if you've read either game - the Opportunity Fire section for example, is similar to that in *Ringworld*. Nothing surprising here then, except some of the skill descriptions themselves: *'CHEMISTRY... represents a character's knowledge of the science of chemistry..'* etc, etc. Hmmm. Wouldn't have guessed that one...

The box claims this game is fast-paced. I hate the initiative system, bulky and slow - a first factor (based on DEX), another derived from weapon type, and a third on Tactics/Strategy skill all modify a d6 roll to determine who acts before whom in a combat turn. Yeeuch! Hot on realism, perhaps, but a stinker to play. And if you've played *RQ2*, the combat system is familiar...

The other notable feature of the rules book is its chapter on character races - 150 of them, and all ridiculous. Six foot tall bipedal wasps, intelligent sharks and apes with bat wings proliferate. Funny, until you realise that you're in imminent danger of dying laughing. If you've not read Chalker's books, this will certainly put you off. Personally, I haven't, so maybe I'm not getting the joke. There *is* a joke, right?

And if the races don't get you, the 'starship blueprints' will. Five computer-produced types, all looking like a 4-year old's Lego models.

The most impressive feature of the game is the stellar generation system, used by permission of TriTac, and taken from *FTL:2448*, a game that appeared in the early '80s. Yup, it ain't even original - and it takes time too. Don't try to map the galaxy, warns the rules book. It seems hazardous to your mental well-being to try.

I endeavoured to like this game. Honest. I looked for nice things to say about it, but I couldn't really find any. I can see the intentions behind it, and the designer ought to be commended for his perseverance - few people could ever manage anything like this without being a professional games company. The box makes it sound all very wonderful, but it doesn't seem to amount to much when you've read it - a sort of third-rate *Ringworld*, actually. Worth buying if you're a rabid Chalker fan, hopelessly rich, or 90% insane.

Phil Frances

OPEN BOX QUICKIES

CITIES - Generic Play-aid - Chaosium £6.95

On the following table, impose these die roll modifiers:

If you like to design events and encounters for yourself: -40

If you like to have a source of random encounters handy for filling gaps in adventures: 0

If you are hopeless at improvising details: +30

If you like using random tables/rolling dice for the sake of it: +50

If you worry about random events overshadowing/diverting from/wrecking the main thread of your adventure: -30

If you prefer events and encounters to be reasoned, tailored to your campaign, game system and style of play: -40

If you mourn the passing of the good, old-fashioned zoo-dungeon style of adventure design: +40

D100 roll	Impression
01 or less	No use at all; arbitrary, unreasoned, repetitive in places.
02 - 25	No substitute for your own imagination, but can be handy if you don't have anything prepared for a game session.
26-50	A useful source of ideas, which you can develop and improvise round as you need them.
51-75	Very useful and labour-saving; no more worries about mapping and populating whole city areas.
76-99	Renders the whole concept of the city scenario obsolete; here is a whole system which generates city adventures *ad infinitum*.
100+	If you buy this supplement, you need never buy a module again; not only does it generate city adventures for ever, but there is also a table telling you if you've been offered an adventure, whether you survive it, and how many experience points you get! Wow!! *G.D.*

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES ADVENTURES! - RPG Adventure - Palladium £4.95

TMNT has been one of the surprise hits of the last year, with multitudes of gamers snapping up copies of the rulebook as fast as importers can freight them over to the UK. Now comes TMNT Adventures, a rather obscure title for a collection of, er, adventures, five in all, that go some way to easing the demand for playable scenarios for the game. The first four are rather brief affairs, occupying only three or four pages each. The plots are fairly similar too - the Turtles hear on the radio that someone is threatening National Security, and then go to his hideout and beat him and his minions senseless (sounds like fun!). These are followed by new rules for super-powered mutant animals ("It's a bird, it's a plane, no, it's Super-aardvark!!"), and a great new ten-page TMNT strip featuring Donatello. Rounding off the collection is 'The White Ronin', a full-scale adventure and the best reason for buying this book, in which our heroes go up against drug-smuggling bandits. The sneaky White Ronin have set up a dastardly death-test: if the Ninja win they'll move their illegal operations; if not the good guys must pledge never to fight crime again! Actually, it's all pretty silly stuff, but it's conveyed in exactly the same po-faced style as the comic, and is thoroughly entertaining. TMNT fans will undoubtedly snap this up as avidly as they did the original game, and will find plenty of fun and enjoyment. *R.N.*

TALISMAN THE ADVENTURE - Boardgame Supplement - Games Workshop £4.95

Had you asked me before I opened the box about expansion sets for *Talisman*, I would probably have said that Workshop could probably churn them out in their sleep, and people would still buy them by the truckload. It was a pleasant surprise, therefore, to find that GW have put a good deal of thought into this neat little package. Open the lid and there are six A4-sized card play-sheets, with places to stick all those fiddly little counters and cards during play and stop them skidding about all over the place. Next up are the usual range of new cards, 60-odd, with some more new characters (cheekily including the Samurai from a past WD, I noticed), spells, monsters and all the rest. Most of these are standard fare, but variety is the spice of life, I guess. The most important thing in the box, however, is the single sheet of card with the new rules on it. Henchmen - like Followers but handier - have been added, as has something called the 'Chaos Bloodbath Option' (what is it with GW and that word, 'option'?). Under this rule there is only one Talisman card, so when one poor sucker finds it all the rest have to try and take it off him again! This can give you a very short game! As will, in fact, the new Alternative Endings. Now when you struggle your way across the Valley of Fire to your goal, one of six surprises could be waiting for you. Maybe the Dragon King, who promptly eats you; Pandora's Box, full of spells; or even the Horrible Black Void, into which you immediately fall. This is just the thing for those irritatingly smug people who always win at *Talisman* - just watch their joy turn to misery as their beloved hero disappears down into the darkness. All in all, *Talisman The Adventure* is a fun package, and will do much to refresh the parts of *Talisman* that other expansion sets can't reach. *R.N.*

INTRODUCTION TO STAR FLEET BATTLES - Wargame Supplement - Task Force £4.95

For those of you who've tried the classic *Star Fleet Battles* and turned away boggled, Task Force have released a learn-as-you-play introductory game, designed to build you up to understanding the basic rules. Aside from the 48-page rulebook, the game includes 54 playing pieces and a hex-map, and is written in a step-by-step manner. Once the introduction is out of the way the prospective starship commander is plunged into a series of twelve scenarios, designed to teach you the game by letting you play with only the rules you need for each episode. The rules are clearly written, though perhaps a little technical at times, and the scenarios get more involved and enjoyble as they go on. The book even gives you a guide of how you should approach Volume I of Star Fleet Battles - interestingly, the 32-impulse movement table and the rules for Boarding Party Combat are superior in the Introduction to those in Volume I! This product is a handy starter for those who didn't understand its fully-fledged big brother, or simply want to test the waters before splashing out on the system. *P.F.*

THE REVISED RECON - Roleplaying Game - Palladium £9.95

Once upon a time there was a game called Recon. It was offensive rubbish in which players could recreate lots of American lies about how they won the Vietnam War. Luckily, it was badly produced and had poor distribution, so few people were ever exposed to it. Unluckily, Palladium have now revised and re-released it in a snappy new edition. Luckily, the game system is as scrappy and as unwieldy as ever. Unluckily, some people may well realise that the sections on military hardware and equipment are probably the best in any contemporary roleplaying game. Luckily, I hope people have more sense than to touch this with a bargepole. Unluckily, I'm not so sure they have. *R.N.*

(Reviews by Graeme Davis, Phil Frances & Robert Neville.)

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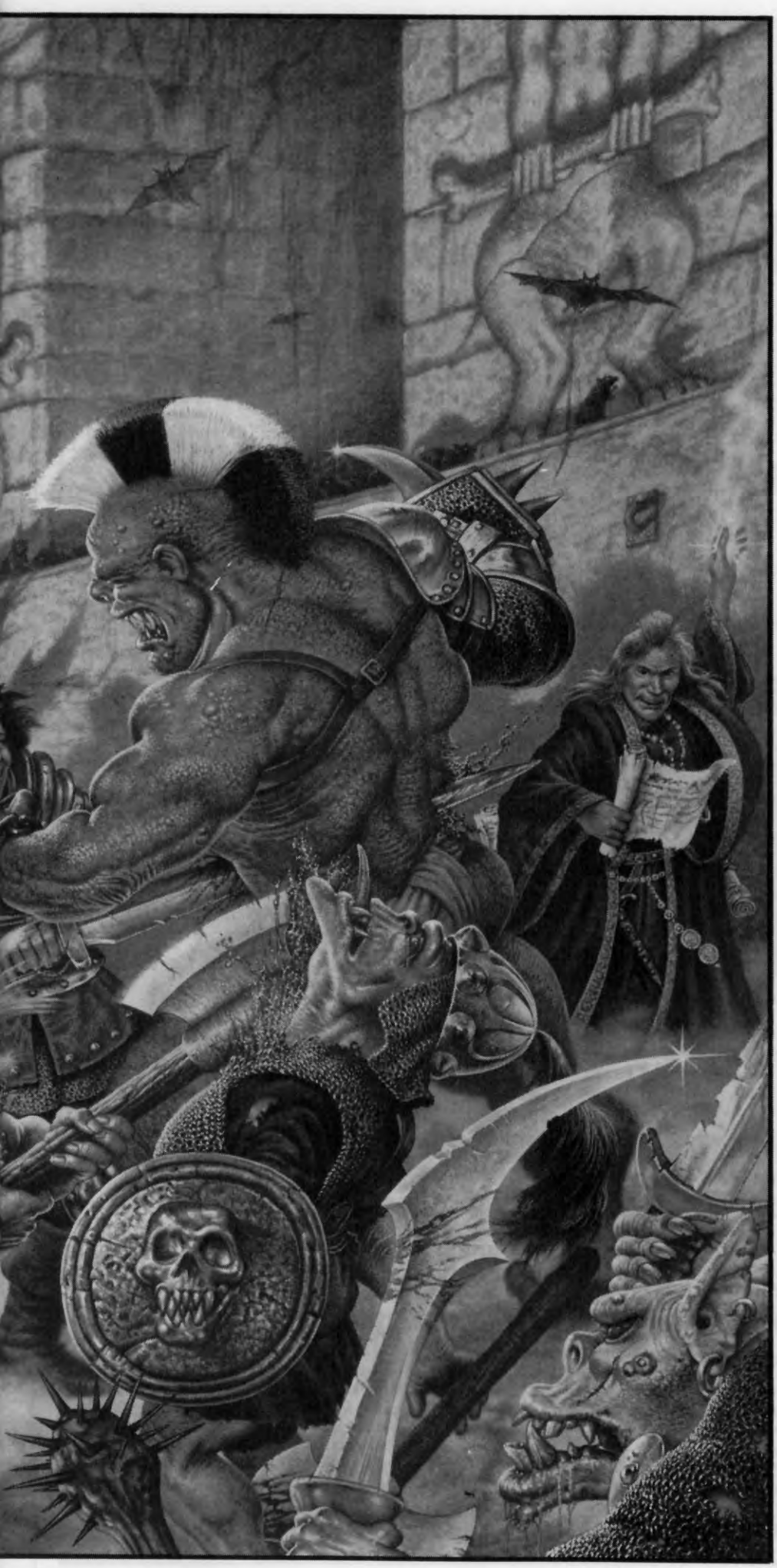

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CRITICAL MASS

A regular book review column, written by Dave Langford

ZERO SUMMER

The most science-fictional thing I've read all month is a travel-agent's placard — *Coming Soon: Summer 1987! Register Now!* So that's why I got no perceptible summer this year. I should have registered for one in 1985...

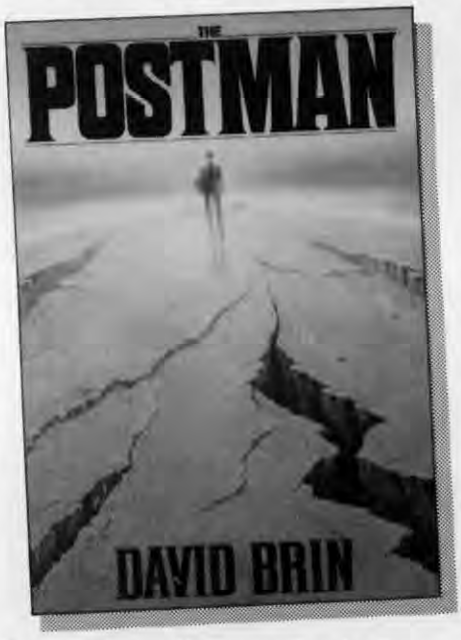
There's still less available summer in David Brin's **The Postman** (Bantam 294pp, £9.95, paperback to follow in January), set in North America after a mini-holocaust and 16 years of nuclear near-winter. I've long been nervous of those peculiarly American "survivalist" types who seem eager for World War III and its glorious aftermath of no taxes, no liberals, and freedom to shoot whom they like. Clearly they worry Americans too; Brin's macho, kill-happy survivalists are the chief obstacle to a returning civilization.

His plot has a mythic simplicity which in synopsis reads more like mind-numbing corniness. Gordon Krantz (a sort of seedy *jongleur*) stumbles on that awesome relic of the Old Reckoning, a postman's uniform. As a symbol of lost order, this has a certain lingering power; trying to capitalize on it as a con-trick for safe passage through suspicious communities, Krantz finds himself spreading a self-fulfilling prophecy of re-established mail services... At first glance the notion panders too much to readers' own wishful thinking. Brin carries it off by showing that people in that ruined world would themselves be ripe for wishful thinking — glad to accept the half-believed lie.

The story is complicated by Krantz's intersection with another myth in the making, and then by a muddle of battle, murder and enhanced super-guerrillas, all a bit of a needless distraction, but never mind. It's nicely written, sometimes moving, and ends as it should. Well worth reading.

Good old William Gibson is back with ten stories in **Burning Chrome** (Gollancz 200pp, £8.95). After Gibson's massive success, this was a collection which had to appear — even if three collaborations and an over-arty first published story are needed to fill it out. They're strong, punchy tales with his glittering "technosleaze" trademark: some are obvious precursors of the novels, and the fine title piece's hair-raising cyberspace jaunt is echoed all too closely in *Neuromancer*. Still, I like the story: it's that one about the young punks who get hold of a .45 and try the big heist, only Gibson's punks are computer jockeys and the .45 is a Russian military killer program.

Ian Watson offers his own alternative to cyberspace in **Queenmagic, Kingmagic** (Gollancz 205pp, £9.95): a sort of "gamespace". The idea of modelling a story on a chess game isn't new to fantasy — John Brunner's *The Squares of the City* is the best modern treatment and Poul Anderson's *The Immortal Game* possibly the worst. Watson's approach is exuberant and not over-concerned with detailed moves: a fantasy war of specialist magics, straight-line, crosswise or askew. This alone is inventive fun, but these chesspeople also go in for original thought about space/time. As a result the hero and heroine, both lowly pawns, manage to project themselves through gamespace as checkmate breaks up their world, and discover the alternative physical laws of snakes and ladders, Monopoly, *go*... The expected unexpected finale is very Watsonesque.



Raymond Leonard's **Omega** (Popular Press 197pp, £9.95) suffers badly from the fact that its theme is too familiar, one of the great SF clichés, on a par with stories which end "And I shall call you... *Eve*!" It's been done and overdone by Fredric Brown, Isaac Asimov, D.F.Jones and Frank Herbert; it's been sent up by Douglas Adams. Humanity unites to build an omniscient super-computer, innovatively called OMEGA, which will solve all our problems! Despite Leonard's vaunted engineering qualifications, the technical obstacles are glossed over, the vast artificial intelligence is lashed together with suspicious ease, and right from the start people are talking in theological terms. Need I go on? It takes endless pages of dreadful portentiousness and worse dialogue to reach the time-worn punchline of Fredric Brown's one-pager, which (as every fan knows) goes "Yes, *now* there is a God!"

Eye (Gollancz 328pp, £9.95) is a "definitive" collection of Frank Herbert's short SF, with the bonus of skilled half-tone illustrations by Jim Burns, plus Herbert's own mixed feelings about the *Dune* movie. It's a good anthology, free of the grotty potboilers which filled out earlier collections. I would have preferred another "real" short story or two in place of the extract from *The Dragon in the Sea* (which deserves to be read in context): otherwise, OK.

An unknown Arthur Conan Doyle novel? That's what Brian Stableford has dug up for the Greenhill fantasy museum: **The Doings of Raffles Haw** (256pp, £8.95), which reminds me that you must all buy Sidgwick & Jackson's lovely softcover edition of my and Brian's *The Third Millennium*... oops. Doyle has an old and familiar tale to tell: The Well-Meaning (but Mad) Scientist who can Make Gold, yet like King Midas finds that Wealth Is But A Curse. Fascinating for collectors and completists.

At last, the paperbacks! Geoff Ryman's **The Unconquered Country** (Unicorn 134pp, £2.95) is a remarkably powerful "alternate world" fantasy which painfully mirrors the recent history of Cambodia. It's difficult to describe: a vision of an organic civilization where even the houses live and move, a symbiosis ripped apart by political upheavals which will never — can never — be explained to the people of the Unconquered Country. It packs a terrific punch. In its shorter *Interzone* form, it won two major awards. Sacha Ackerman's many line drawings work well with the text.

After being harrowed, it's fun to turn to **The Light Fantastic** by Terry Pratchett (Corgi 217pp, £1.95), a direct sequel to his wonderfully dotty *The Colour of Magic*. Again Rincewind the magician cavorts across the apparently doomed Discworld, helped and hindered by the many-legged Luggage, Druids with stone-circle software problems, the nonagenarian Cohen the Barbarian, Death (who gets upset when summoned from cocktail parties) and millions more. Abandoning the cruel fantasy parodies of his previous book, Pratchett leans more heavily on one-line gags: the result isn't as pointedly funny, but still evokes more laughs than anything else around. *Especially* Thrud.

It's not often that I come in at the second reel, but this happened with Peter Morwood's **The Dragon Lord** (Arrow 318pp, £2.95), sequel to *The Demon Lord*. Its plot involves shifting alliances and betrayals centred on an elaborate Code of Honour whereby (as far as I can make out) even God has lost considerable social standing and would no longer be admitted to the best clubs. Morwood works up a tense and exciting atmosphere — his horse-trappings, weaponry and dragon are particularly good — which left me disappointed by occasional stylistic let-downs. It's bad enough when the inhabitants of a fantasy world quote Kipling; when they use words like "adrenalin" and "scenario" the spell definitely fades; and even the author realizes that "paranoia" is a mistake. "It was an odd, cumbersome, unAlban word..." Near the end, drama is dispelled by the in-joke of a cameo appearance by Anne ("Aiyyan") McCaffrey, reciting from her own books. This kind of thing should be left to Terry Pratchett.

In brief: Anne McCaffrey herself returns with the paperback **Killashandra** (Corgi 346pp, £2.95), a frothy piece of romantic SF in the great literary tradition of Mills & Boon. To paraphrase *Star Trek*, it'll leave your crystals drained. Larry Niven's **Limits** (Orbit 240pp, £2.50) includes some good recent short stories: it's a pleasure to see him sweating an interesting idea down to a few thousand effective words rather than bloating it beyond all endurance (*Ringworld Engineers, Integral Trees*). His "Draco Tavern" pieces are particularly entertaining. The collaborations with others (Pournelle, Girard, Barnes) work less well. So it goes. **Top Fantasy** (ed. Josh Pachter, Dent 311pp, £3.95) is an above-average anthology of two dozen authors' favourite stories, which I know I needn't describe because my faithful readers will have committed last year's review of the hardback to memory. And **Dragons of Winter Night** (Penguin 399pp, £2.95), by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman, is... is... er, nice weather for the time of year, isn't it?

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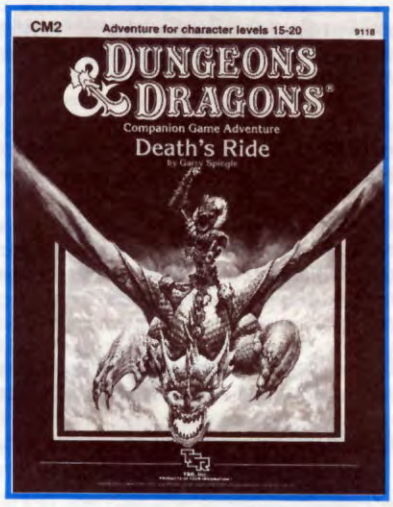

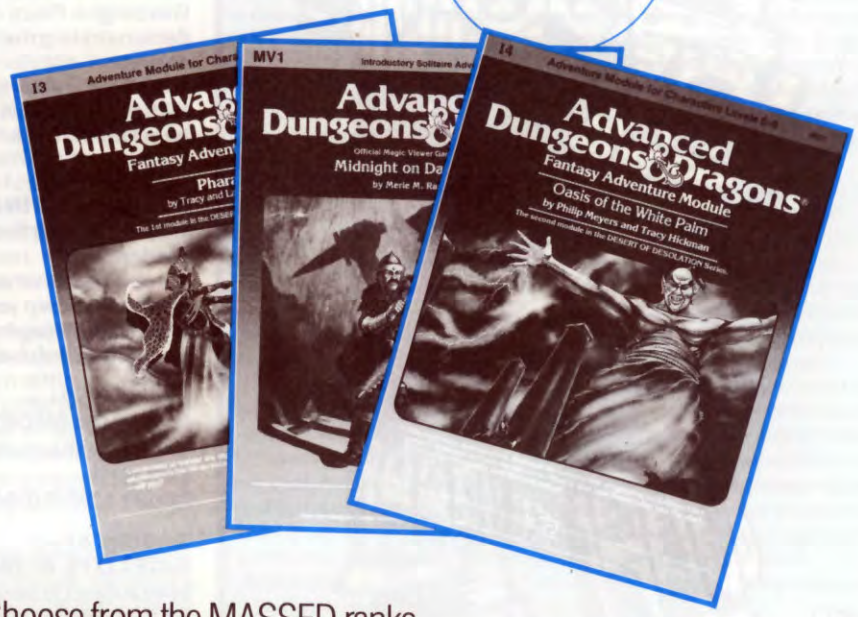

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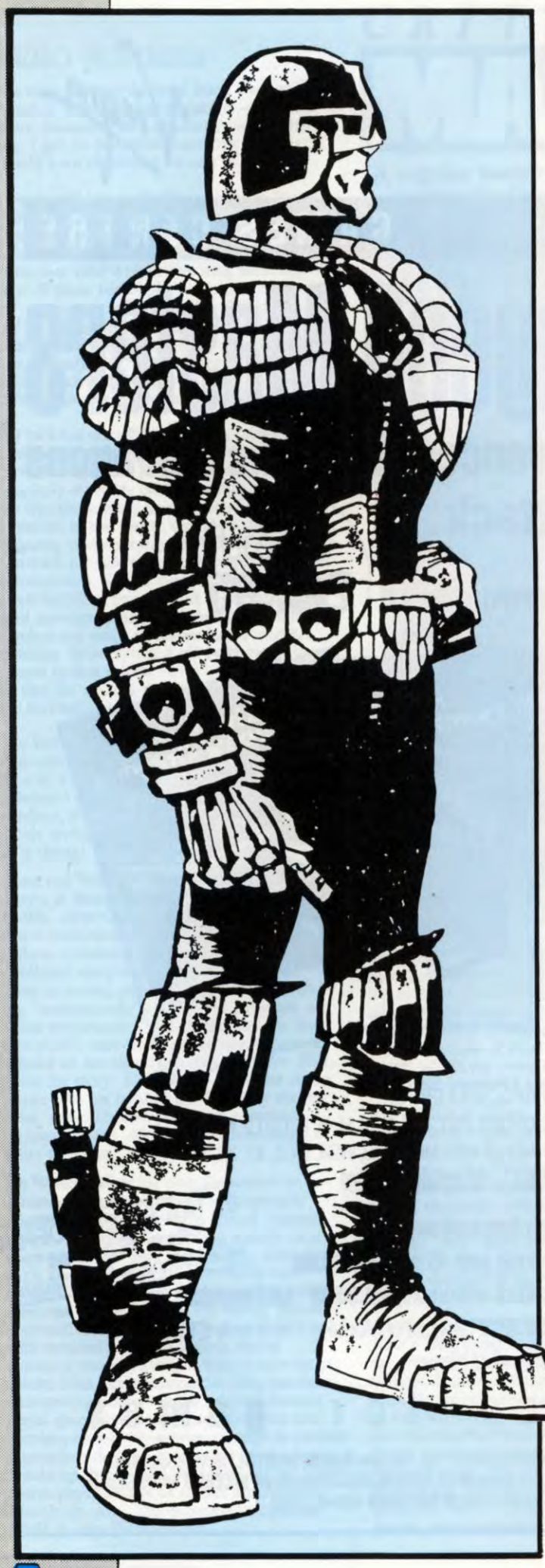


This is a patrol adventure for up to five Judges, covering the activities of a typical day in a typical sector of Mega-City One. *A Day in the Life* can be dropped into a campaign or included as part of a single, longer adventure. It could even be chopped into pieces and used in other adventures!

by Hugh Tynan

SECTOR HOUSE 255, BRIEFING ROOM: SHIFT 3 - 10.50 HOURS

++ITEM 56++
SKEDWAY ATTACKS Over the past three days 67 Mo-Pads have been destroyed on this sector's skeds. There have been no survivors, but witnesses (from nearby Mo-Pads) state that the vehicles simply exploded.
There's a chance that somebody is leaving remotely controlled bombs on the Mo-Pads. Each squad will perform a crime blitz one Mo-Pad. I'll give you the target with your patrol orders.

++ITEM 57++
WALLY SQUAD OPERATIONS The Wally Squad are working the sector this week, investigating an Umpty-bagging epidemic. All other Judges are requested to stay off the case and allow the Wally Squad a shot at infiltrating the group.
The Wally Squad will also be organising a couple of bank heists and other crimes to gain the baggers' confidence. Whatever you do, try not to kill any heisters you happen across. No assigned routes should take you near these operations, but for those of you who can't resist shortcuts - you've been warned.

++ITEM 58++
BOPAROUND A Fancy Dress Open Air Boparound is being held in Marc Gascoigne Plaza at 11.00 hours. The Littlehouse Juve Crew are demonstrating their new dance at 12.00. Large crowds are expected to attend.
You all know what the juves in this sector are like. Your patrol will include a 20 minute stop in the Plaza. The presence of Judges will make a few perps think twice.

++ITEM 59++
PUBLIC MEETING A new citizen's group called 'The Friends of Dredd' are holding their first public meeting in a hall at the Marvin Gaye Skyrail Station.
We don't know what this kind of nut club this is, but we want to be ready for trouble. Keep your eyes peeled. We'd like to prevent any incidents. The civos are beginning to think they can't belong to any organisation since the Chief Judge made it illegal to be a pacifist.

++ITEM 60++
H-WAGON SHORTAGE Several H-Wagons were destroyed recently in a fight with a mutie-hijacked Strat-Bat. Replacements will be delivered next week.
So don't call in the H-Wagons unless you really can't handle it...

++ITEM 61++
SATELLITE ATTACKS Communications Satellite QD-155/173 has been subject to laser fire from this sector. It is suspected that the power for the laser has been taken from the Skyrail tracks, as the trains have suffered momentary power failures all week. All squads will be supplied with special detection equipment that will pinpoint any laser fire.
*Most of the shots are just bouncing off the satellite's solar panels, but some have hit - and eight Tech Judges have been killed. We're cracking down on this, so **please** try not to cause false alarms by using those Cyclops lasers.*

++ITEM 62++
ESCAPING PERPS Someone is going round releasing perps from holding posts. Be on the lookout for anyone hanging around near an apprehended or cuffed perp at a holding post.
Make a special effort on this. We've lost 222(!) perps in the last three days. This creep may pass on the secret, copy his master key or whatever.

++ITEM 63++
Let's be careful out there.

A DAY IN THE LIFE
SECTOR 255

Judge Jude, the assigning officer, then turns to the PCs and gives them their specific patrol orders:

'You're on Zippers today - no, hang on, that's Squad Bracken. You're on Lawmasters as usual. This is your route, along the North edge of the Sector on City Bottom and then circle around towards the centre. You're stopping at the Marc Gascoigne Plaza Boparound at 12.00 for 20 minutes - try to be on time, huh? At 13.10 you're blitzing a Citizen Duffy in his Mo-Pad 'Around the Bend' - big orange Royale job. Look for all the usual stuff, of course, but look especially for bomb making, radio and remote control gear. We've got nothing on this Duffy, which is a teeny bit suspicious.

This is the laser detector thingy. The indicator lights up and beeps if anyone fires a laser within 2000 metres. You've got two minutes to follow the trace to where the shot came from. The H-Wagons have these as well.'

As the PCs leave, they will overhear Jude assigning a temporary room on floor 17 to a pushy (but aren't they all?) SJS officer, close to the SJS resident Judge.

GM'S INTRODUCTORY DATA

Read through the events before you run the adventure for your players, so that you know roughly what is going to happen. This is supposed to be a more or less average patrol in the day of a Mega-City Judge, without a 'main adventure' as such. You don't have to go to great lengths and give subtle warnings that lead up to a climax. Play it as it would happen in MC-1: without apparent logic or connections.

All in all, the events here are just a few hours work for the player character Judges. Assuming, of course, that they can survive those few hours...

ON PATROL

Phase 1: 11.00 - 11.30

The PCs' patrol commences at 11.00 hours, and initially the Judges are heading North through City Bottom along Memory Lane. The street is temporarily deserted, apart from a small creature sitting on top of a street camera - clutching what looks like a very, very powerful thermal grenade! As the PCs speed towards it, they will see that its wrist is through the pull-ring. If it jerks its arm, the PCs - and thousands of citizens - will have less than four seconds to live!

The creature is a Griblig (see *2000AD Progs 464 & 465*) - a small, furry, unbearably cute and highly intelligent little alien pest. The grenade is actually inert, although the PCs aren't going to know this! Normally, its burst area would have a radius of about a kilometre.

The street camera is simply a pole protruding from the side of a building, about 5 metres above ground level, with several viewing guns mounted at the end. It is slowly swivelling, making it difficult to shoot the Griblig - the only feasible course of action. Any other plan, such as trying to reach the Griblig from a nearby window or using Stumm (Gribligs are immune to Stumm, by the way - let's not make this too easy for the PCs), will simply result in the creature running away down the street, waving the grenade above its head. The Griblig will simply dodge a cling net and return to its perch.

Just as the PCs draw a bead on the Griblig and shoot, the creature will leap through an open window about a metre above the pole. You did tell the PCs about the window, didn't you? Shame. The grenade will fall to the ground - and not explode. The grenade will simply bounce, and then roll around quietly on the pavement, still not exploding.

Griblig

S	I	CS	DS	TS	SS	MS	PS
1	99		*You must be joking*				000

The Griblig's attempt to leap through the window will be automatically sucessful (well, look at its initiative). The PCs will automatically miss the Griblig, although the street camera is a different story. The shot will hit it if the missed the Griblig (the die roll was a failure); if the shot hits one of the moving viewers; or because the Griblig's leap makes the camera vibrate. Whatever the cause, the street camera will explode (this is important for the next phase of the patrol) and crash to the street.

Back to the grenade. This is a real grenade with the explosive charge removed. The only obvious way to discover if it is live is to pull the pin. If the PCs ask MAC they will be told that there should not be any live grenades in MC-1. The PCs could call for a Tech Judge, and if they do this they will get lucky - one is nearby.

Judge Renouf

S	I	CS	DS	TS	SS	MS	PS
1	30	41	24	37	28	32	33

Special Ability: Crack Shot

Renouf will arrive after two minutes on his Lawmaster, examine the grenade for about a second, and then pull out the pin. If he is asked how he knew the grenade was a dud, he will explain that 'Drokk! I didn't. If the the thing started humming I was going to lob it down the street and run like spug!' The PCs can and should report him for such an irresponsible attitude, gaining EPs for doing so. Control will send some experienced Judges to pick him up, but Renouf will not offer any resistance.

Once the pin has been removed a tiny tag reading 'Cyn's War Artifacts' can be seen. Any Judge making a SS roll will remember that Cyn's is on the other side of the block. Failing that, MAC can give the PCs a list of possible sources of grenades, and Cyn's is the nearest.

The front door of the shop is wide open, and behind the counter the back room is also open. A few more Gribligs are playing near the dead body of the proprietor, 'Mad' Amme Cyn (there are ID papers on his body). His skull has been shattered by a blunt instrument, and he has been dead for about two hours. Only one item is obviously missing from the shop's stores - taken from a broken glass-fronted display case. A small card identifies the contents as 'An extremely rare and valuable long range flak gun, c1961. Type UI/RR-05.'

MAC can supply information about Amme Cyn: *Lives alone in apartment above shop, family killed in Apocalypse War, no known friends or associates;* and on the flak gun: *Range 350 metres, area burst radius 8 metres.* Cyn's apartment above the shop contains nothing unusual.

Phase 2: 11.31 - 11.59

If the street camera was not destroyed in the incident with the Griblig, ignore this incident and adjust the time of *Phase 3* accordingly. At 11.38 a message comes through for the judge who actually shot at the Griblig and destroyed the street camera: 'Judge (name) of Squad (name of Squad Leader), return to Sector House 255 and proceed to Room 201, Floor 17.' Floor 17... The SJS... Remember? The PCs will!

If the wanted Judge does not leave for the Sector House immediately, the other PCs should be encouraged to make sure that he does so. If he doesn't reach the Sector House within 10 minutes (which he will, if he leaves *immediately*), three more messages will arrive in quick succession. The first will be from the Sector Chief, the second from the resident SJS Judge and the third from the Chief Judge - a Rogue Judge is an important matter! These are just warnings, because if it comes to a fight, the player might as well roll up a new character now, rather than deal with the full force of Mega-City Justice.

When the PC arrives back at the Sector House the resident SJS Judge and the visitor will be waiting in Room 201, which is dark, forbidding and equipped with a table covered in *huge* syringes... The PC will be hooked up to a lie detector, and the interview - or interogation - will start. You should make sure that the PC feels really uncomfortable, and that the SJS Judges are played as nasty, harsh, disbelieving and authoritarian figures, who are looking for an excuse to find the PC guilty of something... You might like to use some or all of the following questions:

How long have you been on the street? Have you ever known a bent Judge? Did you report him? Have you ever thought of performing a crime or of breaking regulations? How many perps have you killed? Were the deaths necessary? Why did you shoot the camera? What were you about to do that you didn't want us to see? When did you start damaging Justice Department property, accidentally or otherwise? Have you damaged anybody else's property? Was it necessary to shoot at the creature? Was it a real grenade? Are you investigating the matter further?

And so on... Eventually, the PC should be released to rejoin his squad at the Boparound in Marc Gascoigne Plaza.

Meanwhile the other PCs should have resumed their patrol. As they pass the William Holden Block, their progress will be halted by a body falling (with appropriate repulsive sound effects) to the ground in front of their Lawmasters. To the right of the PCs is an 'up' anti-grav chute (with huge arrows painted on the side to indicate the direction) runs up the side of the block - and the leaper (if that is what it is) seems to have come from there. If the judges look up at this point, they will see, 105 floors up, another speck in the sky turn into the frantically screaming figure of a falling citizen...

If the PCs look closely at the chute they will see that there are several other figures being carried upwards, that all the chute exits into the block seem to be closed and that yet another citizen has just popped out of a hole in the top of the chute and is plummeting downwards. Calling for H-wagons is a waste of time, as there are none available in the sector at this time.

There is a control box next to the chute (roll Strength or under on a D4 to open), with a two position switch inside. This is currently in the 'up' position, and the PCs may leap to the conclusion that 'down' is literally that - but this is a one way AG chute, and the down position is actually 'off'. Turning the switch to 'off' will result in the six citizens in the tube dropping towards the base of the chute. The first one will hit the bottom after 4 phases and the other six citizens will arrive D10 phases apart. All will be killed in the fall. If one of the PCs tries juggling the switch, it is important to note that the citizens will keep the same vertical spac-

ing as they fall, so turning off the chute for three phases will mean that the lowest citizen will be only 1 phase away from death at the bottom of the tube. The topmost citizen is D4 + 4 phases from the hole at the top of the tube, so the 'juggling' will have to be carefully timed so as not to lose any more lives!

Inside the reception area of William Holden block, sitting behind a desk, is the robot in charge of the AG chutes. It will not respond to any speech or actions. Fortunately, there is a bank of switches labelled 'AGC Exit hatches'. Those for chute 3 are in the closed position, so it is a simple matter to open the exits and allow the citizens to escape from the chute into the block. You may deduct EPs if the PCs don't think to open the chute exits from the top downwards - especially if this results in another death.

While the PCs are engaged in trying to sort out the mess, the floor manager of the block, Ernest Boon, will arrive. Boon will be horrified by what is going on, and will tell the PCs that the exits should be open. Boon will further explain that, because the top of the chute was shattered by vandals, the block's managers decided to close the chute exits at night to prevent any criminals getting into the block. Theoretically, the inactive robot should have opened them first thing in the morning.

The PCs may suspect some sort of robot malfunction, but if they closely examine the robot they will realise that it is, in fact, a Botter! Robert Smythe has disabled the genuine robot, hidden it in a storeroom, and taken its place at the desk. Then he lost faith in his ability to fool people, and has simply decided to sit still and do nothing.

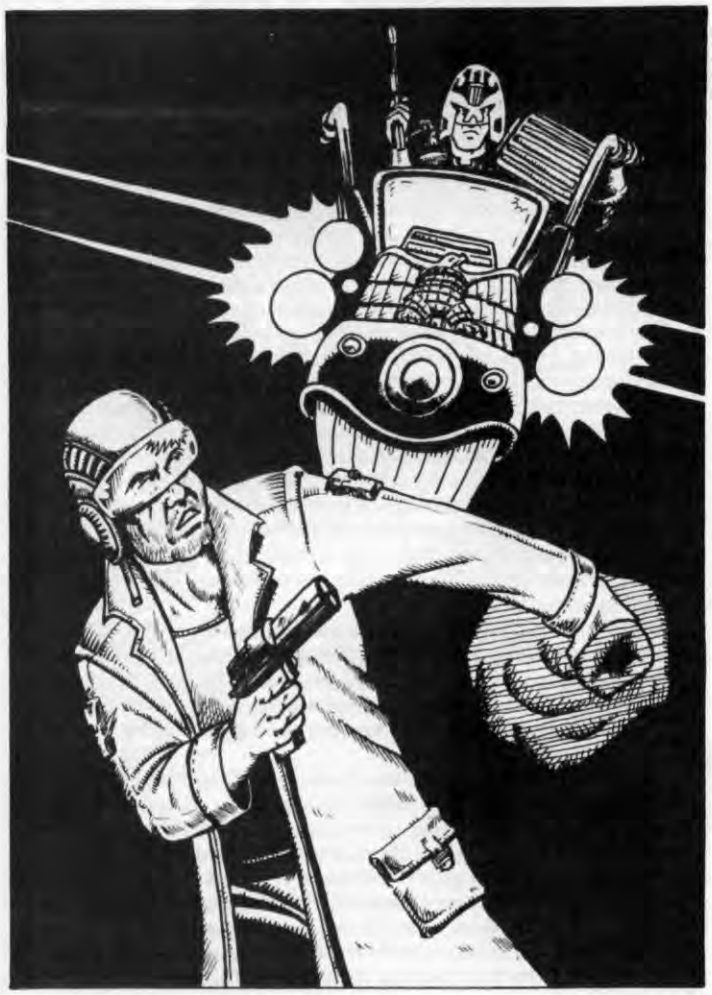
Robert Smythe

S	I	CS	DS	TS	SS	MS	PS
1	21	17	35	15	31	6	15

The PCs can charge Robert with almost anything from damaging a robot to mass murder, and it should be interesting to see what charges they can come up with!

Phase 3: 12.00 - 12.25

The PCs should meet up in the watching bay overlooking the Marc Gascoigne Plaza, which is packed with citizens waiting to see the Littlehouse Juves give a demonstration of their latest dance. A platform covered in criss-crossed conveyor belts except for a small section in the middle, is set up in the centre of the plaza. A group of dancers in fancy dress appear and leap onto the platform, trying to work their way to the stationery centre area. At a pinch, the gyrations, contortions and effort of even trying to stand in one place on the conveyor might be called dancing, and it might catch on - the PCs should be encouraged to decide if this is an activity that might need banning at some point in the future. Eventually, the crowd joins in, leaping onto - and being whisked off - the platform. This goes on for about 10 minutes, and then the scene changes to one of complete carnage.



Around the platform appears the dome of a force force, and as a juve topples into it, she screams horribly as she is consumed. Each combat round after the force field goes up, D6 juves are incinerated as they fall over on the belts and are carried into the field, and the dancers panic as they see the fate that awaits them if they don't reach the safety of the centre section. The PCs will be able to do little, other than move down from the watching bay towards the platform. Once the dancers have been 'thinned out' (after three combat rounds) the PCs will be able to see the cause of the havoc.

Standing on the steady area of the platform - and pushing off anybody else who reaches it - is a juve (not in fancy dress and wearing a T-shirt with 'Roy Hattersley Block Revivalist Dancers' on it). Any PC making a TS roll will realise that he is holding a Remote Activation Unit for a force shield - a farily rare item in MC-1. Destroying this will result in the shield's deactivation.

Kane Lansky

S	I	CS	DS	TS	SS	MS	PS
1	32	20	23	12	43	9	22

Special Ability: Sector Knowledge

If the PCs think of shooting the juve, bullets will simply not penetrate the shield. Just keep telling them that solid matter cannot penetrate the shield until they think of using a Lawmaster's Cyclops Laser. Any laser shots will suffer a -30% penalty thanks to the shield's deflection effects. If the shot hits the activation unit the shield will drop, although a near miss (your discretion) could be ruled to make Lansky drop the unit into the conveyor belts, where it will be chewed to pieces by the motors.

Whether the shot misses or not, two rounds later several H-Wagons will come screeching down out of the sky and spray the whole plaza (including the PCs) in riot foam. If the shield is still up, the H-Wagons will bring their lasers to bear on the perp, with somewhat devastating results!

The H-Wagon crews will dig the PCs out first and if Lansky is still alive there will be little trouble in digging him out as well. He is simply a sworn enemy of the Littlehouse Juves - but this leaves open the question of where he found the shield generator. His answer of 'Found it...' is perfectly true, even to a lie detector.

This answer is also so unlikely, however, that it can't be true - and it isn't the whole story. The unit was deliberately left in a spot where it would be found by an adult enemy of the Littlehouse Juves, along with a note explaining how to use it. Lansky can't read, so he ignored the note - and can't even remember it. A Psi Judge will be able to find memories of the note in his unconciousness. There is no way of tracing the original perp, as all fingerprints etc have been obliterated and the unit wasn't in his possession for long enough for a Psi to pick up an image from it.

After this incident, the PCs may resume their patrol, hopefully not much later than 12.25.

Phase 4: 12.26 - 13.00

As the judges leave Marc Gascoigne Plaza and head off past Walt Disney block, a message comes in from the Sector House:

Emergency! Judge needs assistance. All squads in vicinity of Horst Wessel, Walt Disney, and Pik Botha blocks, proceed immediately to Temporary Biological Research Laboratory OA-S23. Armed Futsie. Judges have been wounded.

The PCs are two minutes away from the Lab. MAC has extensive files on the Lab, which was set up to work on the problem of re-evolving the residents of the Charles Darwin Block, after Professor E Northcote Fribbs reversed evolution enzyme leaked into the block (see *2000AD 184 & 185*). Research has carried out in the hope of curing the citizens and re-evolving Fribbs (now a giant amoeba) so that he can serve his sentence. The research scientists were on a lunch break when the futsie arrived.

The front doors of the building are wide open. Judge Bracken and his squad are under cover behind a jugger (see *JD p112*), but the futsie has a clear view of the doors so they have been unable to leave. Only one of Squad Bracken's Zippers is still in one piece; the others have been destroyed.

Judge Bracken

S	I	CS	DS	TS	SS	MS	PS
3	30	38	52	32	22	28	26

Special Ability: Fast Mount, Control Spin

Judge Curry

S	I	CS	DS	TS	SS	MS	PS
1	14	24	28	30	26	15	18

Curry has been wounded in the head.

Judge Folan

S	I	CS	DS	TS	SS	MS	PS
1	19	14	17	19	22	9	18

Folan has a chest wound.

Judge Greene

S	I	CS	DS	TS	SS	MS	PS
0	9	8	14	12	8	9	12

Greene has been hit in the head and in the abdomen, and needs urgent medical attention.

The perp, Tobin Sors, is hidden behind a set of shelves which gives him 50% armour overall, although he wears no other protection. You should play Sors as a complete loony, who keeps up a constant monologue about how he is going to take over the whole city, free all the Umpty Candy bars, and kill everybody. He is quite happy to let the PCs into the building, so that they can talk to Bracken and the other Judges, but he will fire his gun (the flak gun from Cyn's) should the PCs try to leave or if they get too close - within 15 metres or so.

Tobin Sors

S	I	CS	DS	TS	SS	MS	PS
2	32	44	7	48	17	3	7

Special Ability: Knock Out and Weapons Knowledge

***Weapons Knowledge** is a new TS ability that gives a thorough working knowledge of most weapons and allows expert alterations and expansions to be made to a weapon. Sors, for example, has modified some spit gun ammunition for the flak gun, which gives a +2 effect modifier.*

The battle should be fairly straightforward to run. Sors has only 8 rounds for the flak gun (range 350m, burst area 8 metres). When he has only one round left, he will grab one of the jars in front of him and pour the contents into the gun. This will cause the gun to explode, covering Sors in Fribb's enzyme - and possibly (4%) anybody else in the Lab as well. Those affected will immediately start to de-evolve into lower forms of life.

There are, however, some problems in dealing with Sors. The cages in front of him hold former citizens from the Charles Darwin bock, now de-evolved into monkey-types, lizards, the odd bipedal worm and some rodents. Heat-seekers will home in on them rather than Sors, and if the PCs don't realise the nature of what is in the cages, Bracken or one of her squad will point out that the creatures are innocent citizens who have a chance of being re-evolved. They are therefore not to be killed out of hand in the hope of getting Sors. The futsie is, of course, under no such obligation to protect the lives of the de-evolved citizens.

The rest of the equipment in the Lab is extremely valuable, in particular the Med-Computer and the prototype Re-Evolving Machine. You should feel free to set Acc-Div on PCs who damage/destroy the research laboratory to any degree.

Phase 5: 13.01 - 13.30

The next item on the agenda is the crime blitz on Duffy's 'Round the Bend' mo-pad. Sector control will remind the PCs of the 'appointment', and direct them to the junction between Rick Priestley and Stan Laurel Skedways. The big orange mo-pad will sweep past as they sit on their Lawmasters, without stopping (obviously, as Citizen Duffy doesn't know that he is about to be blitzed).

Chasing the mo-pad is no problem, as it is on a fixed course and speed (210kph), and the Lawmasters can be put on automatic to follow and match its progress. However, the mo-pad has no porch, so somebody must knock on the door (a DS roll to succeed) to get Duffy's attention.

The door will be answered by a small, happy-looking man, who will immediately invite the PCs into his home, which is rather luxurious and comfortable for a mo-pad (Duffy is actually quite well-off). He has a good outlook and a happy disposition, and will immediately ask if this is a Crime Blitz. When told that it is, he will sigh and say 'Errr. Well, I may as well save you the bother. There's a box of sugar in the cupboard in the kitchen - I like it in my synthi-synth - and, ummm, well, I don't know how much you can, errr, find out, but I was doing about 4kph under the limit about an hour ago... Like I say, I don't know what you know, but I'm an ummm honest citizen and do my best. Errr... sorry.'

Putting a lie detector on Duffy will show that he is telling the absolute truth. The confession may well make the PCs suspicious, but going over the mo-pad with a (very fine) tooth comb will produce nothing else at all. All that remains is to sentence Duffy and leave.

However, the Lawmasters will not be there when the PCs try to leave the mo-pad. One can be see in the grabber of a Big Mo mobile service station. It is a relativelyy simple matter to order the Big Mo to stop via a helmet radio, or to board it directly from the mo-pad. Once they are aboard, the robot in charge will be very apologetic, and claim that he had orders from 'Judge Glisten' to collect the bikes from the side of the mo-pad. You don't need telling that there isn't a 'Judge Glisten' in Sector 255, do you? The robot will offer them all a service anyway, now that they are here...

As they are clearing up this confusion, the 'laser detector thingy' will beep and indicator will point into the midst of a group of mo-pads going past on the other side of the sked. From here, run this as a normal chase. Each PC will have to mount his or her Lawmaster, let it down from the side of the Big Mo and then they can begin the pursuit. The PCs have only two minutes until the trace is gone. The indicator could have been pointing at one of three vehicles which are 370 metres ahead of the PCs and travelling at 200 metres per round. As the PCs get closer, one of the mo-pads, a green DonJuan Roadhugger, will slew sideways and decelerate, in the hope that a PC will be just a little *too* close! If there is a PC close enough (your discretion), he or she should make a DS roll to avoid a collision. The driver of the mo-pad, Russell T'bag, will drive erratically and make life as difficult as possible for his pursuers. If he fails a DS roll and ends up crashing off the skedway and down to the city below, fine! This will be a case without any explanation for the PCs.

Russell T'bag

S	I	CS	DS	TS	SS	MS	PS
1	31	20	24	99	12	5	7

Special Ability: Perfection in anything technical at all - this is not just a person with a lot of special abilities, this is a *genius*.

In the event that the mo-pad is boarded, the first PC will be attacked by Russell with an electro-prod. He is very scared, but he will reveal nothing at all under any circumstances short of full torture - and PCs who indulge in this should be reported immediately!

Behind a locked door at the back of the mo-pad is a small room with a computer terminal in it. The disk drives are active as the PCs enter, and

then the screen lights up and there is a *Wiffle...* as Russel T'bag's concealed laser goes into action. You may like to choose to have Duffy's mo-pad blow up a moment later... This depends on whether or not your players are psycopaths who appreciate the little guy getting it in the back of the neck.

The disks in the computer are labelled as 'Traffic Data' and 'Satellite Path & Main Program'. A TS roll (+10% bonus) will enable a PC to work out that the program calculates the position of Communications Satellite QD-155/173 and fires the laser at it. A second TS roll - and accessing the 'Traffic Data' - will show that the program actually bounces the laser off QD-155/173 and then hits a mo-pad, destroying it utterly. Russell is a technological show-off, and on the few occasions when he has hit the satellite, it was because he meant to do so. Even more impressive than the skill used to destroy his fellow mo-padders, is the fact that T'bag is able to take power from the Skyrail tracks by radio waves! T'bag is also responsible for the false message telling the Big Mo to take the Lawmasters in for servicing.

T'bag may be a genius, but is also guilty of the murders of eight Tech Judges, the destruction of 67 mo-pads and their occupants, impersonating a Judge, power theft from the Skyrail tracks and dangerous driving.

Phase 6: 13.31 - 14.00

When T'bag has been sentenced, killed or whatever, the PCs may realise that they are a little off their patrol route. If they report in, they will be told to return to their assigned route immediately.

As they do so, they will hear coming from a crowded pedway: *'Call me SIR, Punk, or it's knee-popping time! Right! Hold it Creep...'* ***BLAM! BLAM!*** *'Sorry for him are you? Well, you're scum as well'* ***BLAM!*** *'Leaving the scene of the crime, huh? OK! RAPID FIRE!'* ***BUDDABUDDABUDDABUDDA!*** as Judge Dredd makes an arrest in his own inimitable syle. Gradually, however, the PCs may realise something is wrong when the firing doesn't stop and the crowd begins to panic.

The PCs will then see Dredd emerge from the crowd, run east, pick up a citizen by the scruff of the neck, shake him, and shoot him through the head! If they still don't realise that something is seriously wrong, Dredd will go through the whole procedure again with another terrified and apparently innocent citizen.

'Judge Dredd' is actually one of eight 'Call-Me-Sir' androids, unveiled by the Friends of Dredd at their meeting at Marvin Gaye. The 'Dredds' are exact copies of the FoD's hero, even down to the programming to uphold the Law. Unfortunately, their programming is a little bit *too* literal, so anybody and everybody is a Lawbreaker in the visual scanners of the androids.

'Call-Me-Sir' Judge Dredd Android

S	I	CS	DS	TS	SS	MS	PS
3	35	35	10	10	10	5	000

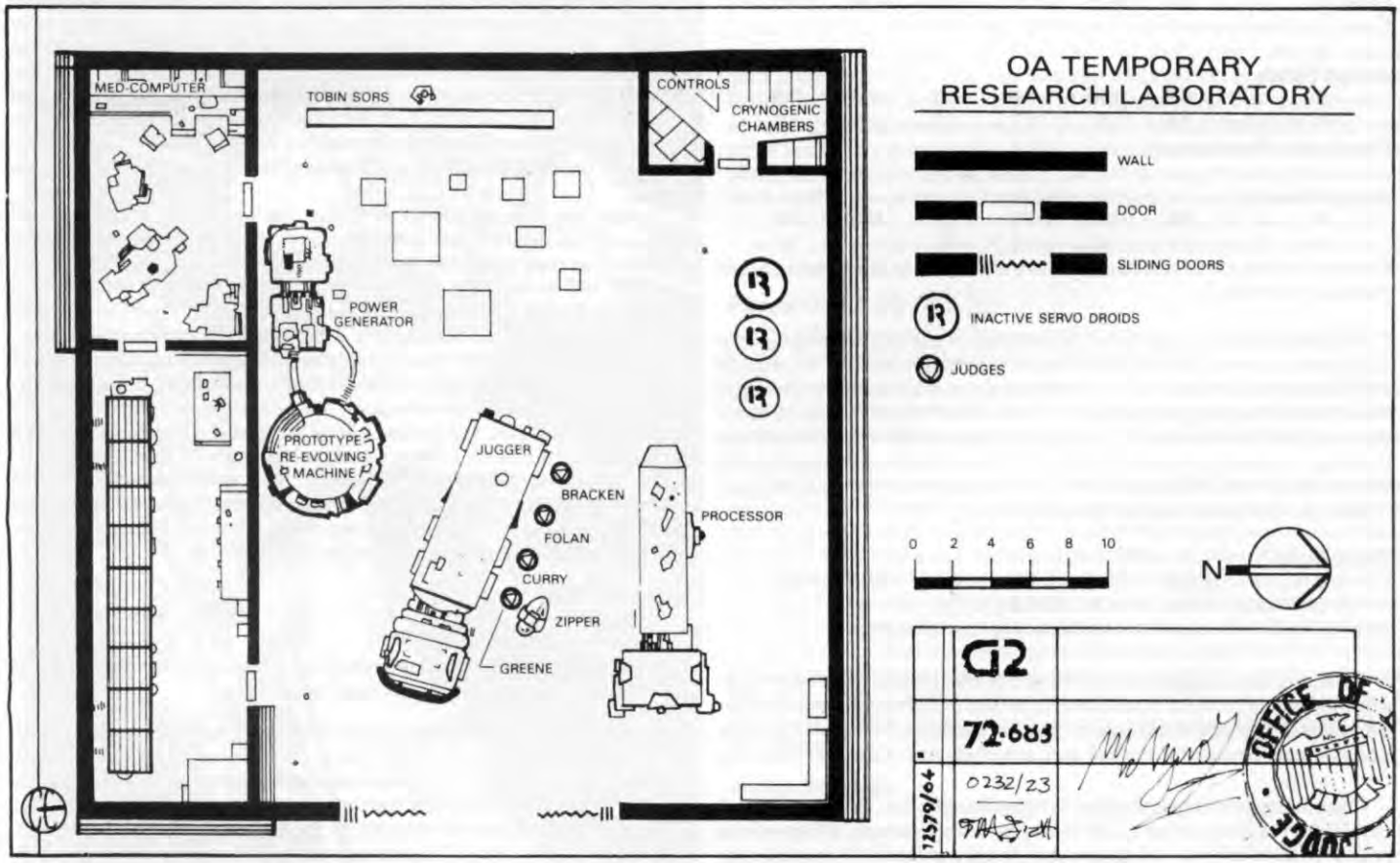
The android will not listen to reason, and will attack any PCs who try to restrain it - claiming that they are Rogue Judges in Dredd's loudest tones. Further fun (for you) can be added to this incident by having another squad of Judges arrive (use the statistics of Bracken's squad, but without the wounds) and misinterpret the PCs actions as an attack on Judge Dredd!

Calling the Sector House will clear up some of the confusion. They will immediately call off the second squad of Judges. Fortunately, five of the robots - including this one - have been traced, but there are still three somewhere out there... You may like to add extra encounters with the mad androids over the next few days of your campaign or to this patrol. The PCs might get called in to protect some genuine criminals (they have rights to imprisonment, you know) from the Call-Me-Sir androids, or they might get assigned to watch Dredd's back when the word gets out that 'he has gone Rogue...'

'AS WE COME TO THE END OF A PERFECT DAY...'

This adventure should reflect the irrelevancies and confusion of a series of everyday incidents in MC-1. EP awards depend on how your players coped with everything that was going on, but an average award of 65 is probably in order.

The adventure may also be continued as another patrol and/or expanded into several full cases. Some of the Call-Me-Sir androids are still on the street... Citizen Duffy might still be cruising the roads (slightly under the speed limit, of course) and may turn his hand to crime now that he has a record and everything... The Friends of Dredd are all now safely tucked away in Kook cubes, but supposing that there are still one or two of them out there, building another set of Call-Me-Sir Dredds - improved, tougher, more Law-abiding models... There is also the mysterious character who left the shield generator for Lansky to find... A technical genius like Russell T'bag is hardly likely to be confined for long... And then there are the Griblig; your PCs didn't catch them? They're breeding even as you read this...



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20-20 VISION

A Bi-monthly column covering fantasy and science fiction movies, by Alex Stewart

Of Mice and Marines

Aliens (Fox, 18): they're coming out of the ventilation shafts on colony planet LV-426. Only one woman on Earth knows anything about them — and the Company doesn't believe her. Still, they send in the marines, and Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) too, thank goodness. Adrenalin surges. The aliens win round one, after which Ripley takes over. There ensues the most exhilarating mayhem these tired eyes have ever seen. James Cameron, who directed *The Terminator* (and co-wrote *Rambo*), has transposed the concept of Ridley Scott's creepy original into a film full of menace, conflict, zip and zap. Oh, and big machines. There may be only one real character in it this time, but she's magnificent, and the others support her perfectly.

We really should celebrate the number of strong and capable heroines there are in fantastic cinema today. Macho men are having a harder time of it. **Jake Speed** (Entertainment, 15) is actor-producer Wayne Crawford's idea of a new adventurer-hero after Indiana Jones — a long, long way after. Speed, played by Crawford, is supposed to be the star of a pulp paperback series, like the Saint or Doc Savage. No one knows he's real until he turns up offering to find an abducted teenager, having been persuaded to take the case by his sidekick, who reckons it will make good material for the next book. The film makers seem to be in some uncertainty whether this is a joke or not. Actually, the film makers seem to be in a great deal of uncertainty altogether. Until John Hurt turns up, having fun being a sleazy villain, the cast hang about, wondering what to say to each other. The result is surely the dullest and least speedy caper movie ever.

Elsewhere, Kurt Russell does a good job of self-parody in John Carpenter's unexpectedly enjoyable **Big Trouble in Little China** (Fox, PG). Russell plays a red-necked, ham-fisted trucker who stumbles into an infernal battle of ancient wizardry and spends the rest of the movie trying to catch up. A 2000-year-old evil magician has kidnapped his buddy's financée, there's a clueless reporter hanging on his arm, and worst of all, he's lost his truck. Carpenter's been watching those cheap Chinese movies where the plot has to dodge between martial arts and special effects. His version is better financed and technically slicker, and sensibly uses a lot of Chinese talent on and off screen. Amiable nonsense, delivered with panache by fearsome demons and flying swordsmen; and the jokes work. Wayne Crawford should take notes.

Another nice surprise is the latest cartoon feature from Disney, **Basil the Great Mouse Detective** (Disney, U). This is a rodent Sherlock Holmes with Vincent Price as the villainous Professor Ratigan, a singing psychotic crimelord rat who feeds unruly henchmice to his enormous pet kitten. The irony is turned up, the sentimentality down — and there's even a (modestly) sexy bit. After their dismal fudge of *The Black Cauldron*, it's good to see the Disney studios taking a step, however cautious, towards the world of animation as it is today. The style is looser and more vigorous, and, in a climactic fight inside Big Ben, effectively amalgamates computer-drawn clockwork with hand-drawn characters.

Haunted Honeymoon (Orion, PG) is Gene Wilder's fond compilation of elements from scary old movies like *The Cat and the Canary*, *The Old Dark House* and *Dead of Night*. Unfortunately the result is (a) just another Gene Wilder movie, and (b) a mess. Far too many characters, each trailing abortive sub-plots, assemble at the spooky Abbot family mansion on a stormy night in 1939. Amid Wilder's overindulgence in timid, repetitive gags, it's hard to sort out who's plotting with whom to bump off who else, and harder still to care. Only an admirably unpredictable performance from Dom DeLuise as wacky old Aunt Kate puts any kind of edge on the silliness at all.

Director Stephen Herek claims that **Critters** (Palace, 15) was originally written years before *Gremlins*. This tale of tiny, toothy gonks from outer space chewing up the Brown residence in Grovers Bend, Kansas ('The Jewel of the Sunflower State') certainly invites the comparison; but in fact, whereas *Gremlins* left me with a headache, grouching, *Critters* scuttled by quite pleasantly. Nothing really stands out, despite M. Emmet Walsh as the sweaty sheriff, and a scene wherein a couple of Heavy Metal bounty hunters blow away a baptist church, but the film actually thinks through how the Browns react, as a family, to the anti-social little aliens.

Haunted Honeymoon and *Critters* send up different aspects of the genre of horror, demonstrating once more how few horror films these days have the courage to take themselves seriously. Finest of the few is **Day of the Dead** (Media Releasing, 18), third in George Romero's projected tetralogy about the zombie plague. As the brain-eating Dead shake the fences overhead, deep in the security bunker scientists work feverishly to discover the cause while soldiers detailed to guard them shift mutinously. Organized around a tough performance by Lori Cardille as the determined research leader, the movie is as much a study of the several inhumanities of science and the military as it is a feast of gore and putrefaction. After all, disembowelling is only one way, the most literal, of taking people apart.

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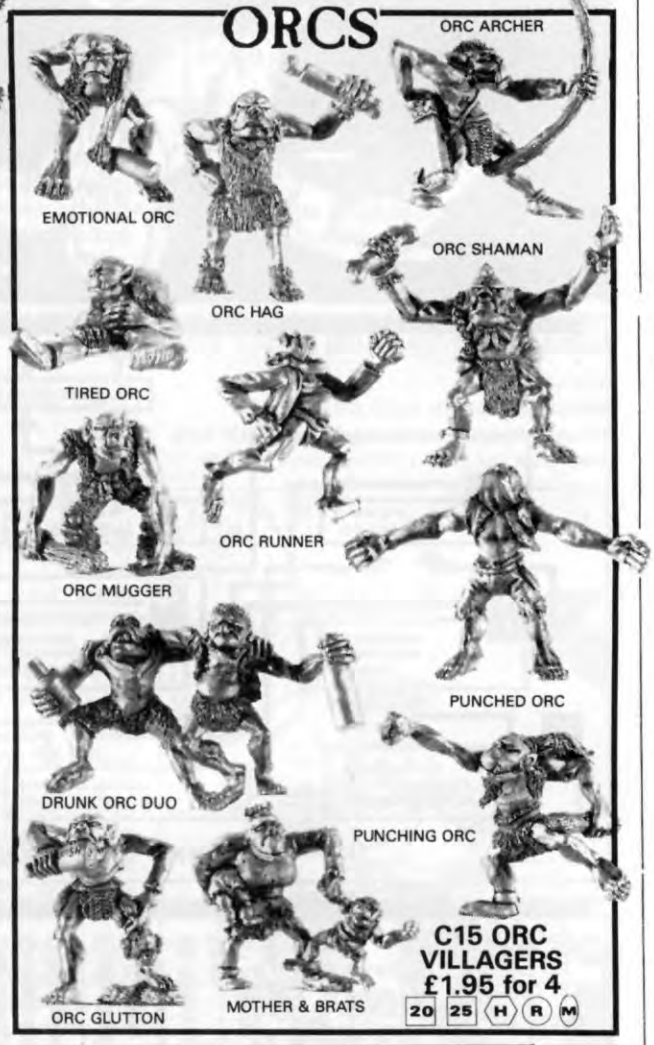

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A TUBE WITH A VIEW: Why are there strange noises coming from a supposedly disused tube station? What dread traitors, or biological monstrosities could be occupying the area? Is it merely part of a Secret Society plot, or worse? The action could all take place inside a pre-Ruin Tube station, escalators and all, providing endless opportunity for players to let traitorously knowledgeable words slip from the mouths of innocent PCs.

MIAMI LASER II: Now we have a transport system, we're bound to get smugglers. Where there are smugglers, there are Internal Security Customs agents. What if they all fall ill due to a citizen-error plague of food-poisoning? Quick, get me some Troubleshooters to cover for them while they're recovering!

MIAMI LASER III: So you want to be a smuggler, eh?

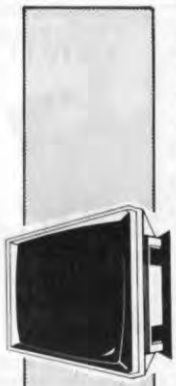
JUST ONE CORNET-O: Say, you remember those Customs agents? They went sick. It seems to have spread to the traffic police too. Now then, where did those Troubleshooters get to? After all, they have the experience. Personally, I want to know which one is going to book that Violet for speeding...

TA-R-MAC-1: A regular epidemic of food-poisoning has hit Alpha Complex. Now the road maintenance men have gone sick. What can happen next?

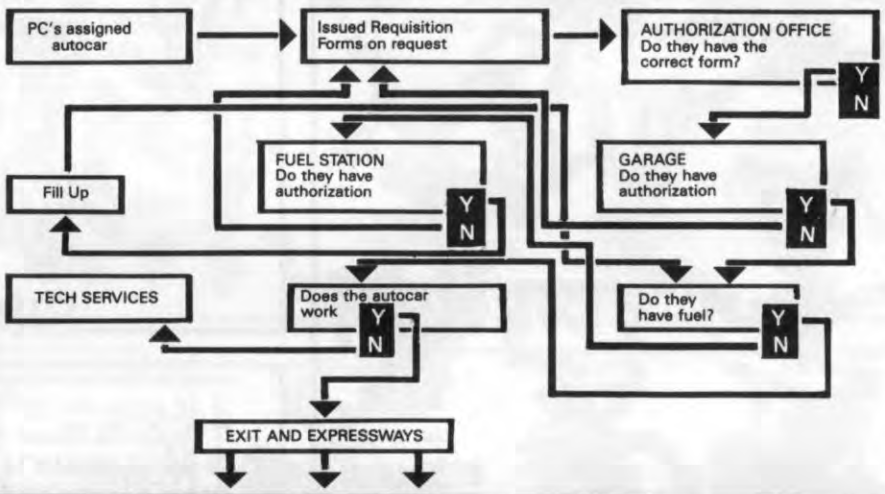
Friend Citizen! Having read this far, please report to your nearest termination station. Thank you for your co-operation.

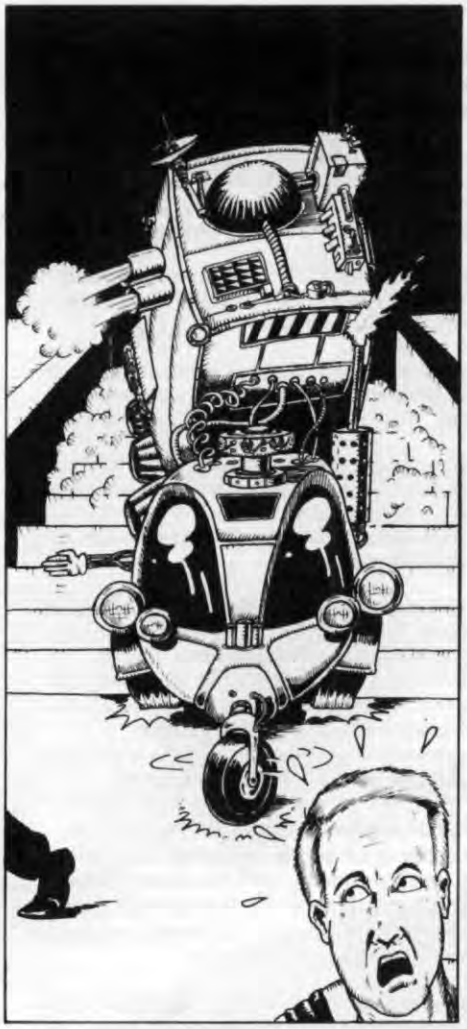
Name:
Security Clearance:
Are you, or have you ever been, any of the following: A Communist (y/n):
Mutant (y/n): **Unreg.**
(If yes, Reg.
Secret Society Member:
The Computer is your friend. Are you the Computers friend? **Yes:** **No:**
Other (please explain):

Preferred vehicle particulars (tick if nec.):
i) Colour: **Black** **Black** **Black**
ii) Number of seats:
iii) Method of Propulsion: Wheels **Tracks:**
Legs **Other**
iv) Means of Propulsion: Engine **Manual**
Do you wish to volunteer to test-drive an R&D model? (y/n)
If no, why not?



PC RUNAROUND CHART (figure 1)





way, has provided large roads, larger signs and suitable traffic directors, problems still occur with treasonous regularity.

When GM-ing this sort of journey, think snarl-up. Think *contraflow*. Think of crossroads with no lights or 'Give Way' signs. Think of your deepest, darkest motoring nightmare, magnify it by a factor of ten, and apply it with glee.

Even if the PCs emerge from the tangled web of the above, there are always the drivers of Alpha Complex to spice things up a bit.

Italian drivers have nothing on the ordinary citizens of Alpha Complex, and it is interesting to note that the popular, high-speed motoring song 'If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands...' has only the one verse and no refrain.

Besides these everyday events, consider the regular Death Leopard rallying events, once vidscreened under the title 'Death Race 2000'.

Consider the Expressway pirates, such as the infamous mechanical traitor Captain Botbeard, and his equally deranged crew.

Consider the dangers of Commie attempts to disrupt traffic. Bot-jacking and bomb-planting are old favourites.

In general, players should be terrified of letting their precious PCs be exposed to the horrors of this once convenient method of transport. Just remember this one rule: accidents are obviously the fault of the lowest security clearance present, even if he has just pulled up to help at your request.

One Way Ticket

In the more centralised areas of Alpha Complex, a transport system, similar to the modern day London Tube is in operation. Tickets may be bought with the appropriate bureaucratic delays, or issued by the Computer, but the above can be left to your imagination, as the real fun starts when the Troubleshooters hit the station platform.

The Tube train of Alpha Complex has four rails: two ordinary rails, and two electrified ones. The track area is Indigo security clearance, for the safety of ignorant citizens, who should know nothing of the above. Occasionally, however, special dispensation can be given.

Perhaps an example is needed. A very high level programmer has just dropped his comm-link onto the track, just by the live rail. Who could be sent to retrieve it?

Surely that loyal Troubleshooter over there is willing to risk a level 14 roll on the damage table for such an august personnage?

No?

Then perhaps these kind fellows from Internal Security can help him or her decide.

Another idea for livening up (if you'll excuse the pun) the lives of the Troubleshooters is to include stretches of track where forbidden places, such as the Outside, can be seen from the train. Note the reactions of the PCs, you may need to execute them!

Finally, remember that the Computer is justly proud of the Tube system, and expects appropriate praise from passengers:

COMPUTER: *'Did you enjoy your trip, friend citizen?'*

PC (in a hurry): *'Yes'*

COMPUTER (offended): *'Yes, what?'*

PC (still in a hurry): *'Yes, I enjoyed the trip, Friend Computer.'*

COMPUTER (very offended): *'But you haven't mentioned the new decor, the new buffet car and the extended leg room.* (switches to concerned voice) *Your eyesight must be impaired in some way, citizen. Kindly report immediately to the nearest docbot for appropriate corrective surgery. Thank you for your co-operation.'*

'Testing, Testing: 1, 2, 3 ...'

Transportation in Alpha Complex is so important that R&D are continually trying to improve it: loyally striving to attain even higher levels of perfection.

Naturally, most items must be tested in the field. Who better for the job than those Troubleshooters trying to sneak un-noticed from that Briefing Room over there!

R&D research falls into three basic groups: improvements, experiments, and historical research.

Improvements to the present systems can include such things as motorised boots, or greasing the Expressways for lessened friction.

Experiments are totally new forms of transport, such as teleportation. Do you remember all the problems a certain enterprising ship used to have with its transporter? Try them on your Troubleshooter, I'm sure they'll work just as well.

It is, however, in the area of historical research that the real gems lie. Issue the PCs with a set of Old Reckoning oars, and ask their use to be investigated. Solutions such as badly made stilts spring to mind!

Give them a donkey to ride and report on. Let it defecate on a Blue level's shoes. Let them explain.

R&D do extensive research, but not all of it is from factual sources. Ask them to test-fly a broomstick. Ask them to hold a feather, put a mouse under their hats, and flap their ears.

For truly, sublimely ridiculous, surgically implant light-bulbs into one of their fingers, and shoot them across the skies of Alpha Complex on rocket-powered bicycles.

Phone home with your report please, Friend Citizen.

The Magnificent Code 7

For a suitable round-off for this expedition into the untamed, wildernesses of the transport systems of Alpha Complex, I include a few Code 7-ish scenario suggestions for you to muse over. Pick out what you like, and discard the rest: it's what they're meant for!

BOTBEARD BUSTING: The PCs are sent to round up this fearless scourge of the Expressways. They might encounter other pirates: Captain Botwash, Long Bot Silver or Henrym-O-RGN-5 for example. They might turn to piracy themselves, or be forced to walk the plank (reputedly an R&D Boarding Device) into SEA sector. See *'Vapours Don't Shoot Back!'* for technical details.

ITS A LONG WAY TO TIPPER-R-ARY

Getting from A to B in Paranoia
Guided by Robert Avery

Alpha Complex is, as you know Friend Citizen, a big, big, BIG place. In fact, it's so big, that if all the citizens were laid end to end they would all be executed for desertion of duty, leaving their posts, and the like.

Knowing how big the Computer, in its infinite wisdom, has made Alpha Complex, don't you, the fun-loving, enterprising GM, find it a teensy-weensy bit annoying when bunches of ignorant Trouble- shooters dismiss a journey from the heart of MID sector to the far, far reaches of FAR sector with a simple 'We go there, then we...'

Don't they know that the Computer, the ubiquitous friend of all citizens, has provided a whole network of Citizen Transport Systems: each one geared to each citizen's particular requirements in terms of speed, security clearance, safety and personal hygiene?

Shouldn't they, as loyal citizens, use these systems to the full?

Perhaps they aren't fully aware of the various means of transport around Alpha Complex. Perhaps you aren't fully aware of them either. Award yourself five treason points and, where necessary, please report to your nearest termination station.

You're still here? Well, Friend Citizen, read on, and learn more of the Computer's munificent benevolence.

Equus Shankos Minimus

The most lowly of Troubleshooters may be forced to travel on foot. This can be difficult, but all Troubleshooters thrive on difficulty for, as the Computer says:

No test, no zest, no citizen!

Corridors in Alpha Complex are all colour-coded by security clearance. This can be fun for the GM. Situations such as '100 yards of Blue corridor, or 5 miles of Red to reach Briefing Room 101 - and you're treasonously late already' can make the Troubleshooters examine the personal motives of both themselves and fellow party members: something that is bound to lead to bloodshed (or do lasers cauterize... but I digress).

Walking does have its advantages: few breakdowns, good reliability, low fuel consumption and it's fairly safe too. Not much can happen to a pedestrian, can it, Friend Citizen? Just imagine...

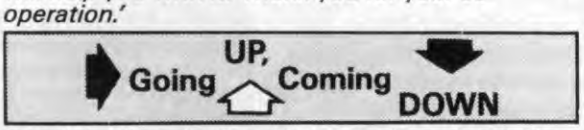
COMPUTER (concerned): *'Citizen, are you aware that you just stepped on a crack in the pavement?'*

PC (confused): *'I'm sorry?'*

COMPUTER: *'Why are you sorry, citizen, have you done something wrong?'*

PC (still confused): *'What?'*

COMPUTER: *Citizen, you obviously have an attitude problem. These men from Internal Security will help you with it. Thank you for your co-operation.'*



But Alpha Complex is not just two dimensional. No siree, citizen. Just because the Computer has knowledge of dimensions beyond your belief, it doesn't mean it has neglected the third.

The Computer never, ever neglects anything, *DOES IT CITIZEN?*

I thought not.

Stairs can cause your average Troubleshooter no end of difficulty. How does one get a five tonne bot on wheels up eight flights of steps? What does one do (or not do) when one sees an out-of-control ten tonne Thermal Generation Plant coming down the stairs towards one (or more)?

The answers to these questions, and many more, are generously provided, on request, from your friend and mine, the Computer. Unfortunately, giving the PCs time to ask is, regrettably, not always possible.

Lifts in Alpha Complex are, of course, wonderously efficient. It is only through the efforts of Commies and traitors that breakdowns occur.

Gosh, there must be an awful lot of traitors and Commies in Alpha Complex, because there sure are a lot of breakdowns!

The old stuck-in-the-lift ploy is distinctly unimaginative, even when seasoned with a sprinkling of amusing NPCs such as JACKTHE-R-IPPER-3, the odd Commie, or even an R&D specialist in elevator repair and maintenance.

Far more fun to have the PCs hurtling downwards at incredible speeds, not knowing if the lift cable has snapped, or this is merely a fast elevator. In the former case, survivors may be quizzed as to why the breakage was not reported on the way down. This is surely the immediate act of any loyal citizen.

The Autocar Of Your Dreams

The workhorse of Alpha Complex is the autocar. Every citizen dreams of being assigned one for his own personal use: to modify and decorate as he wishes. Oh, the furry dice of the Romantics, those Trekkie stick-on warp engines — all freely available from your local Free Enterprise dealer.

This privilege is usually only granted at Blue level or above, but more lowly Troubleshooters may may occasionally be loaned a suitably decrepit autocar for short periods of time.

It is here that the bureaucracy of Alpha Complex reaches forth, with its clutching tentacles of red tape, and infernal din of clacking scribebots and scratching pens. To aid the GM in properly enforcing this bureaucracy have two examples of the kind of fun that can await the mobile Troubleshooter: a simplified and shortened PC Runaround Chart *(figure 1)* for you to build on, and a sample autocar requisition form.

Progress around the flowchart can be halted by such things such as death from old age, but escape from the forms is well nigh impossible. Let the forms of the clone-fathers be vested on the clones.

Once out of the garage areas, the Troubleshooters will be free to drive their treasured autocars along the Expressways of Alpha Complex.

Traffic difficulties are paramount in Paranoia. Although the Computer, in its own kindly

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EXPERIENCE LEVELS IN AD&D

by Carl Sargent

AMIDST all the rule revisions and proliferations in ***Unearthed Arcana,*** one element of ***Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*** which badly needed revising got overlooked - the issue of how characters gain experience levels. The system as it stands is that characters must train for 1-4 weeks to gain a level (the better the character is played, the shorter the time) at a base cost of 1,500gp per current experience level per week. This usually involves a trainer, but for characters who have been played in an 'excellent' or 'superior' manner, self-tuition (which takes double the time and is therefore double the cost) is possible. At 'name' level, characters no longer need a trainer, and the cost of training varies as a function of the character class.

This system has a large number of shortcomings. First, it makes gaining experience levels impossibly expensive for low-level characters. A first-level thief requires 1,251xps to qualify for second level, and even if the thief has been played *excellently* the gp cost exceeds the xp award. If the thief was merely played in a 'superior' manner, that's 3,000gp to cough up. Unless the GM gives a low xp-for-gp ratio in awarding experience, and is pretty generous with the monster's treasure hordes, the thief simply won't be able to afford the training. Poor reward for a vulnerable first-level character who has been played excellently or in a superior manner, it seems to me. Other classes don't get off lightly, either; the cleric, needing 1,501xps for second level, may also struggle, and the fighter, needing 2,001xps, can forget the 400gp he was hoping to put by for a suit of plate mail to replace the chain mail he (probably) started out with.

Where it gets positively ridiculous, of course, is when characters qualify for third level; because, in the case of every major character class, the xp increment needed to gain third level is exactly the same as that needed to gain second level while the training cost *doubles*. The thief again needs 1,250 more xps to reach third level, but the (absolute minimum) training cost has jumped from 1,500gp to 3,000gp! If GMs played training costs by the rules in the ***Dungeon Master's Guide***, it's likely that no character would be able to afford training for the third level until long after the xp total qualifies him or her for it. And this assumes that the GM is being reasonable about how well characters have been role-played. If the GM rates a player's running of a character as 'Fair, more norm than deviations' (and isn't that an accurate description of many first-level characters played by inexperienced players?), our thief needing an extra 1,251xps for second, and again for third level, would have to pay training costs of 4,500gp for the second level and a staggering 9,000gp for the third. It's pretty clear that the official system is unplayable. Before trying to correct the problems, one central question needs considering; just what is a character learning anyway? Answering *that* gives us the building blocks for constructing a superior system for determining training costs.

Broadly, there are five major characteristics which change as level does. These are: hit points; mastery of magic; special abilities (notably for monks and druids); new weapon proficiencies; and improvements in hit rolls and saving throws (which change in parallel). Cavaliers and paladins also change ability scores, and barbarians have a rather dubious easing of restrictions with respect to use of magic and the like.

Some of these (eg gaining a new weapon proficiency) seem to be more obviously linked with the idea of *training* than others (eg gaining another hit die). Yet *all* of them involve improvements in the character's powers and *can* plausibly be linked with training. Consider the matter of hit points: a 10th-level fighter with a decent *Con* score will have more hit points than the average rhino, but obviously this doesn't mean that the fighter can literally take more physical damage than a rhino before falling down. The abstraction of 'hit point total' includes such things as luckily dodging blows, taking a graze where the same blow might kill at a lower level and so on. This *could* have a lot to do with training - learning how to avoid blows and the like. The point I'm making is that a rational system for determining training costs should be developed by deciding what characters learn and how they change and improve as they gain levels, and exactly what it is that training does for them - this isn't necessarily obvious. Each GM should consider these issues for himself - the system I'm about to suggest is just my idea, other GMs are encouraged to develop their own systems.

In this system, I discard two elements of the ***DMG*** scheme entirely. First, self-tuition is not possible (it's so costly as to be virtually impossible for lower-level characters in the official system anyway). This is largely because I like to use training as a way of developing PC/NPC contacts, a point I'll come back to later. Second, training costs do not vary as a function of how well-played I perceive characters to have been. For the life of

me, I cannot see why a fighter whose alignment has strayed a little from time to time should have more trouble learning to use a longsword in training than a paragon of virtue. I prefer subtler ways of rewarding well-played characters and providing incentive for others to improve.

The system considers six elements. The first is the current experience level of the character (any system will use this). The second is *base cost*, which is tied to the first element. The third is *spell gains*, applicable to spellcaster character classes. The fourth is *special ability gains*, which can be very tricky to formulate, for reasons we'll discuss later. The fifth is *weapon proficiencies gained*, and the last is what we may term *matrix jumps*, level gains where the hit rolls and saving throws of the character change. My system (like any other) makes arbitary assumptions, and is empirically derived to be affordable for characters - but still a stiff clout in the swagbag for many. The main difference from the official system is twofold. First, low-level characters can afford training. Second, training costs do not increase in a regular manner as the level to be gained increases; sometimes, it can actually be *cheaper* to gain a higher level than a lower one. As we'll now see, there are excellent reasons for this.

The base cost (**B**) I built into the system was 500gp + 150 x (current level)^2. It looks ugly, but it works; *Table 1* shows that **B** keeps pace with the xp gain characters need for gaining levels, and the use of the square keeps **B** reasonably low for low-level characters whle increasing it sharply for higher-level characters who can afford it. **B** is a factor which covers expenses for all nonspecific aspects of training, and clearly to justify the increases training must take longer at higher levels - another point to come back to. But now the extras come in.

The first of these is *spell gains* (**SG**). There are two parts to this. The first is to consider whether the spellcasting character is gaining any spells of higher level than he/she could previously cast. The cost for this is high, reflecting the greater training necessary for mastering this new skill; the cost is, in gp, 150 x (level of spell gained)^2. Again, use of the square keeps costs down for low-level characters while making higher-level ones pay for gaining increasingly powerful magic. The second part is that a spellcaster may (also) gain an extra spell or two of a level which is already used (eg a second-level cleric gains an additional first-level spell), and the cost for this is cheaper (in gp, 50 x (character level) x (spell level)). The charges given apply for clerics and druids (and ranger use of druidic magic); magic-users' and illusionists' spells (and ranger use of MU spells) are charged at double these rates. There is both logic and balance in this. The logic is that clerics and druids master spells at least in part by the power of faith and the aid of their deities, assistances which the MU and illusionist don't have. The balance factor is that MUs and illusionists don't have to pay so much for other elements in training (ie, proficiency gains and matrix jumps), so that a balance is struck across character classes.

Special ability gains (**SA7**) are tricky. The special abilities gained by the druid at third and seventh levels are not charged for, because the ***PHB*** states that they are innate and the druid has to pay heavy charges (as a percentage of his total treasure) anyway. Likewise, charging for thief backstab gains would ruin a fourth-level thief trying to pay for training to gain fifth level (see *Table 1*). Further, continuous developments of talents like the cavalier/paladin gaining of dexterity, strength and constitution, and the ranger's increased damage bonus against giant-class enemies, don't seem to me to be discrete **SA** gains. What *does* qualify, though, is the gaining of multiple attacks per melee round by fighters and fighter subclasses, which is a hefty increase in offensive potential and seems linked training-derived skills. The paladin's acquired ability to turn Undead, gained at third level, also seems a discrete and powerful ability gain and is likewise charged for. Many of the abilities gained by barbarians (being able to strike enemies only normally hit by magic weapons, etc) also seem fair candidates for a hefty charge. The real problem is the monk, of course: AC improvements, faster movement rates, multiple open-hand attacks, *and* the special abilities listed A-K in the ***PHB***. To avoid hammering lower-level monks with excessive training costs, only the A-K abilities are charged in the final system. The charge for gaining any **SA** is steep, fixed at gp cost of 500 + 100 x (current level)^2. One arguable weakness is that I have counted all the diverse **SA** gains above as equal, but obviously some are more powerful than other. A fighter gaining an extra melee strike every two rounds has gained rather more than a monk who can induce catalepsy in his/her body, in my view. But to fix different charges for all the different **SA** gains above would have been to introduce too many personal and arbitrary opinions, and different GMs can make their own decisions on this and adjust the **SA** charges in *Table 1* accordingly.

For *Weapon proficiency* gains (**WP**) I charge a flat rate 1,000gp; more than this is not affordable by lower-level characters. I can't see any justification for increasing this as level increases; there seems to be no reason why a seventh-level MU should have any more trouble mastering the use of a quarterstaff than a first-level one. So a flat charge it is, and, as it has to be affordable for low-level characters, 1,000gp fits the bill.

Finally, *matrix jumps* (**MJ**). The cost here is 100 x (current level)^2 in gps. This could well be higher, but again the problem for low-level characters precludes an increase. One specific oddity is the monk, the only character class for whom hit rolls (every three levels gained) and saving throws (every four levels gained) improve at different rates; if half an **MJ** is involved, just charge half the normal amount. Easy.

Looking over *Table 1*, there are problems which remain. Clerics and druids are going to stay poor at low levels, but this seems inevitable in almost any system which fixes training costs as a function of what characters gain. For the cleric the problem is caused by the relatively low xp gains needed to gain second and third levels, whereas for the druid the problem is caused by the tremendous gains in spell power this class makes when the third experience level is achieved. Obviously some character classes have to pay a much higher percentage of their treasure for training than others - but that's reflective of the fact that, in AD&D, certain classes (most strikingly the druid and, to a lesser extent, the thief) need many fewer xps to gain levels than other classes (the monk and barbarian).

What looks odd is the fact that training costs can *fall* sometimes as the experience level to be gained increases. Well, why not? A sixth-level cleric training to be seventh level finds that his hit rolls and saving throws improve and he can now master a fourth level spell (two with 18 wisdom; note that the system does *not* charge extra for bonus spells gained through high

wisdom since this is a function of the individual and not his/her training). A seventh-level cleric training to be eighth level gains four spell levels (a first and third level spell) but no new level of spell, and no improvements to hit rolls or saving throws. Why shouldn't the sixth-level cleric pay more? He gets a lot more for his money, after all.

A final word of warning: it is still the case in *Table 1* that the cost of training can sometimes exceed the xp gain needed to qualify for an extra experience level when the character is acquiring many new skills/spells/proficiencies etc, although this problem is nowhere near as bad as in the official system. However, it is possible for characters facing this prospect to salt away monies gained at lower levels to save up for the later, expensive, training. Still, two cautions follow for a GM. First, if you award xps-for-gps on a 1:1 basis the charges in *Table 1* will be too high at low levels and you will have to lower them. Second, certain character classes (paladins, monks, rangers, etc) are supposed to give away lots of their monetary gains and you should permit them to pay training costs *before* extracting the golden readies for donation to those mysterious worthy institutions the ***PHB*** is always going on about.

I must stress again that the formulas used in *Table 1* are arbitrary and comprise a system which I find works; the key thing for other GMs is not to adopt this system, but to think about a logical system for determining training costs based on what characters get for their money, and to try it out. Some of my assumptions other GMs won't agree with, and many may feel there are things I've overlooked. Fine! Just be sure your own system is consistent within itself.

But is it all really worth it? Why not do what the ***D&D*** game does and just ignore the entire problem? I don't think this works too well, especially when one considers weapon proficiency gains and, above all, spellcasting classes. They need training to master more complex magics, a source of the spells they want for their master and travelling spellbooks (MUs and illusionists) and, at least in the case of most clerics, they will be affiliated to a temple which will be keenly interested in their progress and they will have responsibilities to that temple. It could be argued they should *want* to seek tuition from a highly-respected senior cleric. And a scheme for training is an opportunity, not a boring detail to be avoided. NPC trainers can be sources of gossip, treasure maps, adventures, informants, friends... using such NPCs helps to reinforce the campaign world as a *social* world. What's more, NPC trainers give extra flexibility to determining training costs. If a PC really can't pay the cost, an NPC may agree to train him/her in return for part-payment in the form of some service or other. You can't do this kind of thing if you permit PCs to train themselves, for in this case costs must be inflexible (unless you charge nothing at all, which is really rather ridiculous considering everything characters gain when an extra level comes along). There are other advantages to creating NPC trainers who form relationships with PCs: I'll give just two examples. First, you may at some time find that certain PCs are not available for adventuring at some time during the campaign (maybe they have something else to do, or the player(s) involved are not available so you can have a minority of your PCs act as henchmen for trainer NPCs who have some small-scale adventure on their hands. Second, in higher-level campaigns there often comes a time when an Unfortunate Death threatens to ruin an adventure. The PCs are stuck in the depths of the Underdark when the big front man takes one blow too many and then fails his resurrection roll. The adventure is now badly unbalanced; matters can be remedied (perhaps) by an MU *teleporting* back to base and recruiting an appropriate NPC fighter who has trained one or more of the PC party and knows them and trusts them to come and help out. Of course, a DM can remedy the situation in other ways (the Drow have a high-level ranger prisoner, he suddenly decides, and aren't the PCs fortunate to find him?) but bringing in a known and trusted NPC, a trainer, is a lot less contrived and is also something the PCs can think up and do themselves.

Considering higher-level play brings in another point; PCs, at some stage, can become trainers themselves, thus adding even more PC/NPC interaction and maybe providing a little extra in-

come for those expensive higher-level spell components. This can also slow down the campaign to a more realistic time-scale, and brings home to players that even friendly NPCs don't just exist for their benefit. For example, in my own campaign it is a condition of training by members of temples and official guilds that, on attaining seventh level, the PC must make himself avialable to act as a trainer for a minimum period of six weeks per year — this helps to reinforce the picture of NPCs as independent characters with their own goals and motives, and when you have to undertake the same responsibilities that they do!

Finally, all this isn't to say that self-tuition isn't possible. Indeed, in *Table 1* I've only computed charges up to 'name' level (I'm not certain where this is for druids and monks, so levels 14/17 have been used as cutoffs there), because it seems reasonable that self-tuition should be a major possibility at this point. Indeed, although I don't usually allow self-tuition at lower levels (because this suits my campaign), if you're going to run an epic adventure such as the *Temple of Elemental Evil*, you will have to allow it. 'Alright, brave Lymeswold, that's the first level done, enough xps for another level so let's travel fifty leagues home, get trained, and come back 'n' give 'em some more welly' — hmmm. Not really on, is it? And what's more, when you do allow self-tuition you cannot use the official system for determining the *duration* needed for completing training, because then Lymeswold and his mates will need lengthy holidays between the *Temple* levels, allowing the occupants ages to regroup and get reinforcements and the like. Now *that* problem — duration — I'm going to duck, because every GM has to determine this depending on the circumstances of his/her campaign.

One last hint. My own players were required, when their PCs were needing training to gain second level, to fill in forms from official guilds which (amongst other things) required them to state in 100 words or less why they felt they were suitable candidates for training. Now that *was* fun, and I commend it to any GM!

Current	Cost for Character Class											
Level	Cleric		Druid		Fighter		Ranger		Cavalier		Paladin	
1	B,SG	950	B,SG	1000	B	650	B	650	B	650		
2	B,SG	1950	B,SG	2750	B,MJ	1500	B,MJ	1500	B,MJ	1500		
3	B,SG,MJ	3450	B,SG,MJ	3350	B,WP	2950	B,WP	2950	B,WP	2950		
4	B,SG,WP	5900	B,SG	3300	B,MJ	4500	B,MJ	4500	B,MJ	4500		
5	B,SG	5250	B,SG,WP	7650	B	4250	B	4250	B,SA	7250	B	4250
6	B,SG,MJ	11150	B,SG,MJ	10000	B,SA, WP,MJ	14600	B,WP,MJ	10500	B,WP, MJ	10500	B,SA WP,MJ	14600
7	B,SG	9450	B,SG	9250	B	7850					B	7850
8	B,SG,WP	17300	B,SG	15250	B,MJ	16500	B	13250			B,MJ	16500
9			B,SG,MJ	24800			B,SG	17300				
10			B,SG,WP	22900			B,SG,WP	14550				
11			B,SG	36900								
12			B,SG,MJ	53100								
13			B,SG,WP	44400								

Current	Cost for Character Class									
Level	Barbarian		Magic-User		Illusionist		Thief*		Monk	
1	B	650	B,SG	1000	B,SG	1000	B	650	B	650
2	B,MJ	1500	B,SG	2550	B,SG	2550	B	1100	B,SA,WP	3000
3	B,SA,WP	4250	B,SG	3000	B,SG	3000	B	1850	B,SA, ½ MJ	3700
4	B,SA,MJ	6600	B,SG	6250	B,SG	6250	B,WP,MJ	5500	B,SA,WP, ½ MJ	6800
5	B,SA(x2)	10250	B,SG,MJ	8500	B,SG,MJ	8000	B	4250	B,SA	7250
6	B,WP,MJ	10500	B,SG,WP	12150	B,SG,WP	8700	B	5900	BSA,WP, ½ MJ	12800
7	B,SA	13250	B,SG	13000	B,SG	12650	B	7850	B,SA	13250
8	B,MJ	16500	B,SG	17850	B,SG	16500	B,WP,MJ	17500	B,SA,WP, ½ MJ	21200
9	B,SA,WP	22250	B,SG	19200	B,SG	21950	B	12650	B,SA, ½ MJ	25300
10	B,SA(x2) MJ	46500	B,SG,MJ	33750					B,SA,WP	27000
11									B,SA	31250
12									B,SA,WP,MJ	52400
13									B	25850
14									B,WP	30900
15									B, ½ MJ	45500
16									B,WP, ½ MJ	52700

Note for Table 1

* includes assassins and thief-acrobats

Key

B	Basic Cost
SG	Spell Gains
SA	Special Ability Gain
WP	Weapon Proficiency Gain
MJ	Matrix Jump (hit roll/saving throw change)

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THE CRUDE, THE MAD & THE RUSTY

THE CRUDE, THE MAD, AND THE RUSTY

A Warhammer Battlegame

by Aly Morrison, Jes Goodwin and Graeme Davis

The battle was over. Corpses lay broken on the field where an army had died, and the last survivors on the losing side were now rapidly-diminishing dots on the horizon.

On the edge of the battlefield stood Skrag the Slaughterer, breathing heavily. Piles of dead littered the ground about him, and his starmetal axe dripped crimson tears for their souls. For once, he was tired of killing - every bone in his body ached with a terrible weariness, and he bled from a dozen small wounds.

Perhaps it was because of this battle-weariness that the renegade Ogre did not notice the movement in the bushes behind him, did not hear the whispers, or the soft footfalls. Whatever the cause, he was taken completely by surprise by what happened next...

This short two-player battlegame uses the *Warhammer Fantasy Battle* rules, and is based round the legend of Skrag the Slaughterer (see WD79, p.50). When Skrag made his pact with the renegade Chaos god Malal, he was led to a Chaos Dwarf hold where he forced the smiths to forge a great suit of plate armour. Once it was fitted, Skrag massacred the Dwarfs, using their blood to consecrate his armour to Malal's service.

Unknown to the Slaughterer, there was one survivor. Ever since that day, the Chaos Dwarf Spikes Harvey-Wotan has shadowed the renegade Ogre, awaiting the chance to avenge his comrades. He has sworn an oath to his master Khorne the Blood-God that he will strike the blow that will end Skrag's life. Now, he believes that his waiting may be over.

In his travels, Wotan encountered the mad Dwarven engineer Oxy O'Cetylene, and was allowed to borrow one of his latest inventions - a steam-powered fighting robot. He knows that Skrag is weak after the battle, and is hoping that the Tin Man will be able to weaken the Ogre further. Then he can step in and deal the fatal blow, according to his oath. The Dwarf has also gained the services of two fellow-worshippers of Khorne, a pair of Chaos Goblin Fanatics calling themselves Blood and Gore. If they can distract the Ogre long enough to allow the Tin Man to close for combat, his plan might just work.

Setting Up

A full-colour board is provided for use with this game - you can use the counters provided to represent the participants, or the appropriate Citadel miniatures.

One player plays Skrag the Slaughterer, and the other plays Spikes Harvey-Wotan, the Tin Man and Blood and Gore. Skrag starts the game on the square marked **S**, and the other characters start in the dotted area at the other side of the board. The Wotan player moves first; after the first round, the characters move in desending order of *Initiative* scores.

Skrag's Wounds

At the beginning of the game, the Skrag player rolls a D6, halving the result and rounding fractions up, and adds 2. This is Skrag's initial *Wounds* score, taking into account any wounds that he may have suffered during the recently-finished battle.

Powering the Tin Man

At the beginning of the game, the Wotan player must decide how much fuel to give the Tin Man. The Tin Man can be loaded with up to six units of fuel. Each unit allows the robot to function for one round. When the Tin Man runs out of fuel, it may keep on going for a little while before finally grinding to a halt. Every round after the fuel has run out, roll a D6:

First round on no fuel - stops on a 6;
Second round on no fuel - stops on a 5 or 6;
Third round on no fuel - stops on a 4, 5 or 6;
Fourth round on no fuel - stops on a 3, 4, 5 or 6;
Fifth round on no fuel - stops on a 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6;
Sixth round on no fuel - stops automatically.

Turn Sequence

1. Move - each figure may move a number of squares up to its **M** score, in any direction. Figures moving over piles of corpses move at half speed (i.e. each square with piled corpses in it counts as 2 squares for movement purposes). The Tin Man cannot move over piled corpses.

2. Attack - a figure that is in base-to-base contact with another figure may attack.

3. Malfunction - if the Tin Man loses *Wound* points in a round, roll a D10. If the result is **more** than it's *Initiative* score, a *special effect* has occurred. Roll again and consult the following table:

D10 roll	Result
1-2	Shutdown. The Tin Man ceases to function.
3	Explosion. The Tin Man explodes; every figure in an adjoining square takes one *Strength* 6 hit.
4-5	Berserk. The Tin Man's **A** score is doubled, and it attacks the nearest figure to it.
6-7	Arm falls off. Equal chance of left or right arm. **A** is halved.
8-9	Leg falls off. Equal chance of left or right leg. **M** is halved.
10	Head falls off. **WS** is halved, and the Tin Man moves in a random direction; roll a D8 at the beginning of each round to determine the direction:

1	**2**	**3**
4	**X**	**5**
6	**7**	**8**

The Tin Man will attack any figure with which it comes into base-to-base contact.

Winning

The Skrag player wins the game if Skrag survives, or if Wotan does not survive.

The Wotan player wins the game if Wotan deals the blow which kills Skrag.

The game is a stalemate if Skrag is killed by any figure other than Wotan.

Hints on Play

The best tactic for Wotan is to use the two Goblins to distract Skrag until the Tin Man can close for combat. Wotan must then wait until the Tin Man is destroyed or until he judges that Skrag is sufficiently weakened for Wotan to stand a good chance of killing him.

The best tactic for Skrag is to keep clear of the Tin Man until it runs out of fuel, attacking Wotan if possible.

The Cast

Spikes Harvey-Wotan

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Int	Cl	WP
3	7	6	4	4	2	5	2	10	10	10	10

Special Rules

As a Chaos Dwarf, Wotan does not *hate* goblinoids, nor does he suffer *animosi*

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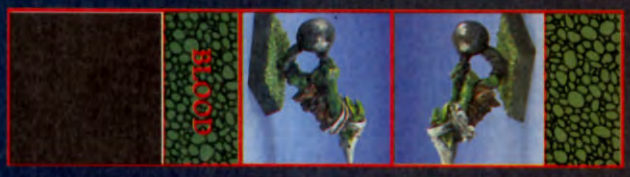

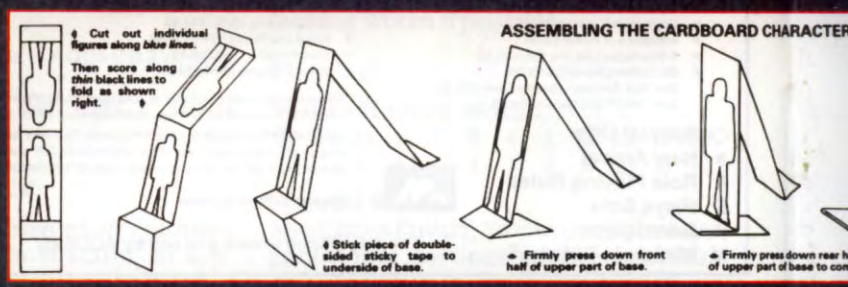

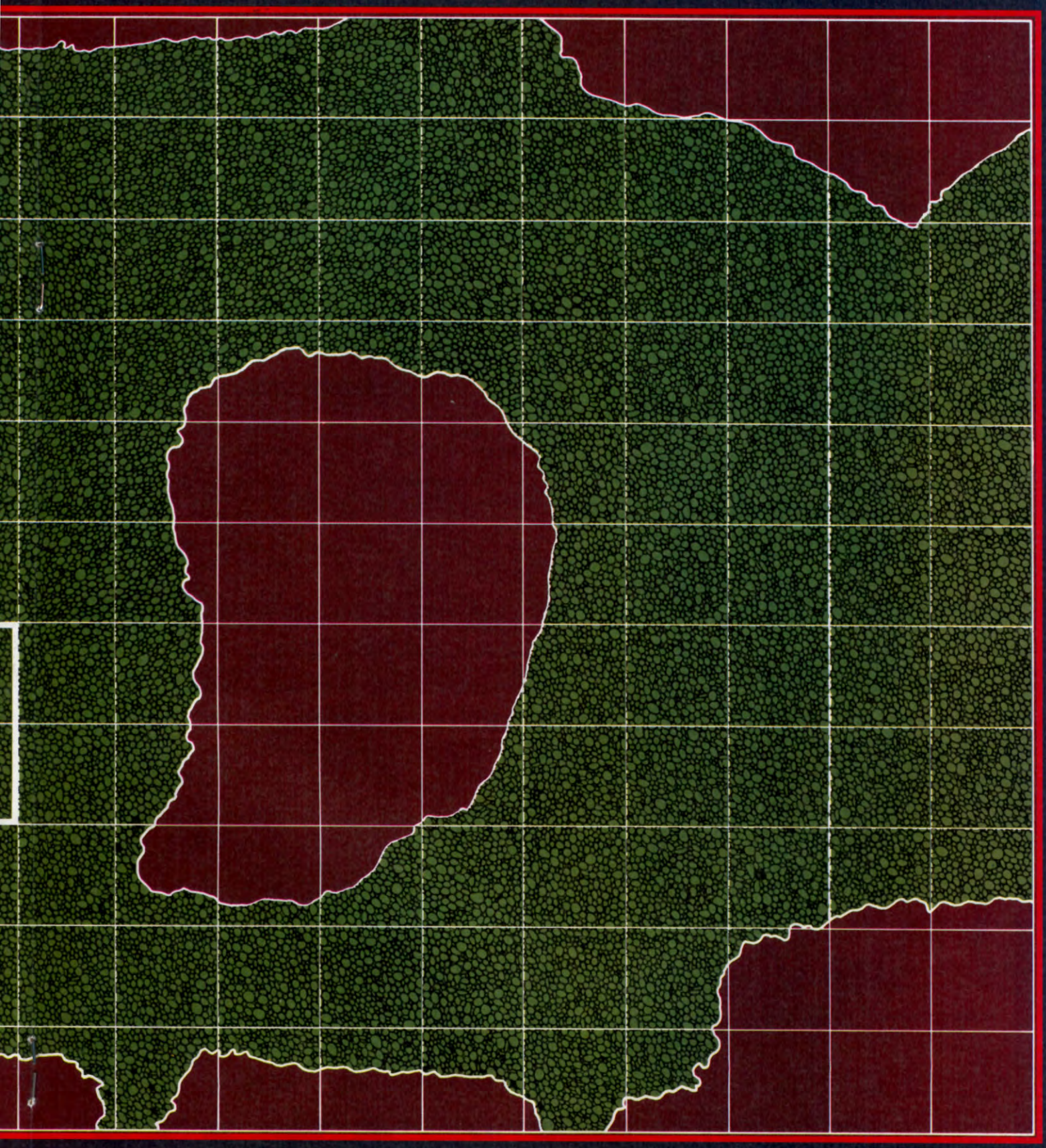

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ty against elves. He is subject to *frenzy* when fighting Skrag the Slaughterer. Wotan's armour gives him an armour saving throw of 5 or 6.

Skrag the Slaughterer - Ogre Major Hero

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Int	Cl	WP
6	7	5	5	6	5	6	4	7	6	5	9

Special Rules
Skrag's *starmetal* axe is not magical, but it behaves as if inscribed with an everlasting *rune of cutting and smashing*. His armour has a *rune of protection* and an *armour rune*, giving him an armour saving throw of 4, 5 or 6. As he is becoming symbiotic with his armour, it no longer encumbers him, so that his move is not reduced. Skrag is subject to *frenzy*.

The Tin Man

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Int	Cl	WP
6	7	0	5	5	5	3	2	0	0	0	0

Special Rules
The Tin Man's metal skin gives it an armour saving throw of 5 or 6. Other special rules are given above.

Blood and Gore - Chaos Goblin Fanatics

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Int	Cl	WP
4	*2*	*3*	*3*	*3*	*1*	*2*	*1*	*5*	*5*	*5*	*5*

Special Rules
Blood and Gore are subject to *frenzy*, and are both armed with the ball-and-chain - see the *Warhammer Fantasy Battle* rules, Vol. 1 p. 41. They are unamoured.

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THEN EVERYTHING WENT BLACK...

An optional rule for Call of Cthulhu.

by Marcus L. Rowland

While the flavour of *Call of Cthulhu* is mainly derived from the writing of Lovecraft and associated authors, the way the game tends to be played owes quite a lot to the pulp detective stories of the twenties. Most investigators carry guns, associate with criminals, and live in a world of violence. As Philip Marlowe said 'Down these mean streets a man must go'; investigators tend to travel streets even more sinister than those which Marlowe encountered.

Since the game owes so much to the pulps, it's odd that one major tradition of the genre is missed from the existing rules — it's almost impossible to knock someone out with a single blow. While this is usually an advantage, since players and NPCs need a chance to respond to attacks, it makes some types of activity difficult to arrange.

For example, let's suppose that a single assailant wants to temporarily incapacitate an investigator to steal an important clue, as part of a kidnapping plot, or to frame the victim for a crime. To do so the attacker must:

1 Approach silently (sneak roll).
2 Strike a single blow inflicting damage equivalent to at least half the victim's hit points (roll to hit, roll damage).
3 Hope that the victim rolls more than CON on 1D20.

This adds up to a fairly slim chance of success, and tends to leave the victim badly incapacitated for prolonged periods.

By comparison, pulp detectives were often knocked out, were usually able to get up and fight again soon after they recovered consciousness. This may not be totally realistic, since blows to the skull powerful enough to cause unconsciousness can easily lead to skull fractures or cerebral haemorrhage, but it was an aid to plot development.

The rules which follow are simple, totally unfair, and should **not** be made available to player characters; they should not be used to advance the plot of an adventure, and must not be used routinely, since they give the attacker too much of an advantage.

(1) Any surprise attack (or attack against a helpless foe) which: is intended to produce a knockout; won't leave the victim in inevitable danger of death; and is made with an appropriate weapon (eg a club, martial arts attack, fist, gun butt, etc.) will produce unconsciousness if the roll to hit is successful.

(2) The duration of unconsciousness is proportional to the damage rolled as follows:

Damage (hit points)	1	2	3	4	5	6+
Unconsciousness (minutes)	1	2	4	5	15	30

(3) If the blow produces a knockout under these special rules the victim revives with a splitting headache, but will only take 1 point of damage.

Example: *Eli Still, the corrupt butler of Grimsdale Manor, has killed Lord Grimsdale, but suddenly realises that he has lost the Cursed Amulet of Set which is the symbol of his secret faith. Approaching the room where he left the body (via a secret passage), he looks through a peephole. An investigator, Sir David Neville-Smythe, is kneeling over the corpse, with his back to the secret door! Picking up the poker he had previously used to murder Lord Grimsdale, Still carefully opens the door, tiptoes up behind Neville-Smythe and clips him behind the ear, recovers the gem and thoughtfully leaves the poker in Neville-Smythe's hand. As Neville-Smythe regains consciousness and staggers to his feet a trio of constables bursts through the door, and an over-excited housemaid screams "He's killed the master!" ...*

Eli Still made two Sneak rolls, to open the door quietly and creep up to Neville-Smythe, then rolled a hit with the poker. Normally the blow would do a 4 points of damage (modified to 3 because Still is small and sneaky). Instead it knocks Neville-Smythe out for 4 minutes, ample time for Still to get the gem, frame Neville-Smythe, and escape.

Neville-Smythe isn't in immediate danger (the bruise behind his ear should prove that he's a victim, not the murderer) and has learned that the killer is somewhere in the mansion. He also caught a glimpse of the Amulet, though he can't identify it. The murder weapon has been found, and may eventually reveal some clue. Eli Still can proceed with his plan to destroy the Grimsdale family and claim his inheritance as the long-lost heir, then use the money to set up a temple in the catacombs under the mansion. The plot is kept moving.

Example: *The sinister Doctor Wo Fat and a dozen thugs have cornered three investigators in his Whitechapel lair, but needs to transport them to Salisbury Plain for a ritual sacrifice at Stonehenge. He knows that they will start screaming if he lets them stay conscious, and signals his thugs to knock them unconscious.*

Lady Amanda Prentiss is struck immediately, and knocked out for eight minutes. Sir David Neville-Smythe and Joe 'Whippet' Hammond, his chauffeur, try to put up a fight. Neville-Smythe can't break free from the thugs holding him and is clubbed, knocked out for 15 minutes. Hammond is apparently luckier; he wriggles out of the thugs' grasp, and starts a fight. Unfortunately he is outnumbered 13 to 1, and the thugs soon beat him unconscious. When all three are subdued, Wo Fat injects them with a sinister Oriental drug; they will recover consciousness when he injects the antidote.

As Wo Fat and his men carry out three unusually heavy laundry hampers, Inspector Fosdyke of the Yard and a van full of constables prepare to follow them ...

Under these special rules a helpless victim can't dodge a knockout blow, and a prisoner held by four thugs is effectively helpless. Lady Amanda was taken by surprise — Wo Fat gave a signal, rather than a verbal order. Neville-Smythe struggles (opposing STR to STR) but can't break free, and is soon clubbed. Hammond is simply battered to a pulp. Luckily he's an NPC and the several weeks he'll need to spend in hospital won't seriously affect the campaign.

Despite appearances this isn't a hopeless situation, and Inspector Fosdyke and the police will arrive to free the investigators after Wo Fat has revived them and explained his plan to summon an Old One, moments before it actually materialises. Of course, the investigators' Mythos knowledge will be needed to block its materialisation, and they will be the ultimate saviours of England ...

To summarise, this special rule should only be used to advance the plot, not in situations where investigators will be left in hopeless danger. Knock an investigator out to steal a clue, murder an NPC, or kidnap him, but don't use this rule to kill them as soon as they are unconscious. Don't use it more often than you have to, or investigators will treat every room and doorway with suspicion.

THE BLACK KNIGHT

A Short Adventure for *Pendragon*, *Warhammer Fantasy Role-Play* and *AD&D* by Bryan Sturdy

This adventure should be suitable for a single high level character, or a mid-level party. You will have to decide for yourselves whether this short adventure will present a sufficient challenge for your player(s). Statistics for creatures and NPCs are presented in a separate section at the end of the adventure. Notes to such items as 'gold pieces' should be translated into whatever coinage is appropriate. For AD&D you might like to inflate the amounts of money involved to take account of that game's abundance of gold.

BACKGROUND

Oakhelm is a village, built within the walls of a larger town, set on the southern side of Lowbough forest, surrounded by farmlands. The nearest large town lies some distance to the north through the forest although the path was, until recently, well-travelled.

Oakhelm was once a prosperous and thriving town, until 125 years ago when, on Midwinter's Eve, a group of trolls descended upon the town, killing, eating and despoiling everything and everybody that they found. The town guards put up a short fight, then fled with the rest of the townsfolk. By dawn, the surviving townspeople had summoned enough courage to return, but the trolls had vanished into the night.

By chance, a band of six Knights of the Order of the Silver Moon rode in from the north. When the trolls returned, the Knights rode out and harried them back into the forest, where the trolls were surrounded and utterly destroyed. Returning to Oakhelm, the Knights, three of whom had been mortally wounded, were horrified to find that the townspeople turned their backs on them. Furthermore, it appeared that the townsfolk had also stolen the fallen knights' swords, although these had actually been taken by Alunal the Mage, the indirect controller of the trolls. The people of Oakhelm now feared the violence of the Knights as much as they had feared the trolls. The Knights rode away, vowing that they would make Oakhelm and its people pay for their ingratitude, discourtesy and theft.

Oakhelm went into its long decline, with less and less trade with the towns to the north, and smaller acreages being put under the plough. Now the final backbreaking straw for Oakhelm's survival seems to have appeared.

For the past two months a mysterious knight in black armour has been blocking the path north from Oakhelm. The knight resides in a pavilion by the only ford in Lowbough forest. At all other points the river is too swift or its banks too steep for a cart even if another path could be found through the forest. All who have wished to cross the ford have been challenged, or a toll of 10 gold pieces or 'the swords' has been demanded.

Obviously, none of the knight's conditions can be met by the simple peasants of Oakhelm, who cannot fight, are desperately poor and don't know what is meant by 'the swords', so they can no longer travel north to trade. The villagers can just about raise 5 gold pieces between them, and they are willing to offer this sum to anybody who will rid them of the knight. They know that this is not much, even when it is all they have...

It is likely that the PCs will have to deal with the Oakhelm's 'Mayor', Bardolph Fletcher, who will explain the village's predicament, arrange for accomodation (although it is likely that the PCs would have to pay the miserly villagers), and pay the PCs (but only when the job is done).

Oakhelm is a miserable collection of huts, but the villagers will be happy to talk to the PCs about their sad history, but they will not mention the fact that they turned against those who helped them. The number of trolls will vary according to the speaker, but *everybody* knows that the trolls' cave, which has never been found, must be full of 'jools and preshus fings...'

THE KNIGHT

There are, in fact, seven knights who wear identical suits of armour and take turns to watch and wait at the pavilion by the ford. The knights are the descendants of the original Knights of the Silver Moon, who have continued the vow of their forefathers. Honour prevents them from simply slaughtering the Oakhelm villagers, and they have settled on this scheme of blocking the way to and from the village - and strangling it by cutting all connections with the outside world - as the means of making the village pay.

The knights will remain where they are until the onset of winter; the bitter cold of winter should complete the villagers' downfall. Only when the village is finally abandoned, or if they ever the swords that were taken from the fallen knights will they quietly ride away and leave Oakhelm in peace. The toll(s) of 10 gold pieces will be taken, but only so that they can be given to the Order as a contribution to the upkeep of the knights' tombs).

Offering the knights any or all of the three swords that were taken from the fallen knights (and are now in Alunal's treasure chamber - see below) will also result in their departure. The knights assume that the villagers have the swords, and do not know that Alunal took the swords after the fight with the trolls was over. They will be willing to leave Oakhelm in peace if the swords are returned.

Each of the knights guards the ford for one day, while another awaits within ear-shot should the first one fall in combat. Even if these two knights are killed, another two will take up the watch on the following day, until all are dead.

The waiting knight at the ford will usually be encountered outside his pavilion, mounted on his large, black warhorse, with another similar horse tied a short distance away. He will answer no questions, but will demand the toll to use the ford, or challenge one of the PCs to a fight. He will dismount and fight on foot if required to do so. Any of the knights will fight as long as he can hold a weapon, and will refuse any offer of surrender (although they will allow opponents to withdraw). If captured, a knight will kill himself at the first opportunity, rather than give his companions or purpose away.

Within the pavilion are food, drink and weaponry suitable for a knight - greatswords, maces, lances and the like. The knight will offer the use of any weapons he has to the PC who fights him, although not the use of a horse.

The knight's cave (where they spend their time when not at the ford) is well-stocked with food, and quite comfortable. The knight's have yet to discover that, at the back of their cave, is a concealed tunnel leading to the trolls' old lair. Allow the PCs a 50% chance of discovering this entrance.

THE OUTLAWS

Within the confines of the forest are a small band of outlaws , lead by self-styled 'Defender of the Poor', Hugh of Lowbough. He and his men are complete thugs who would willingly cut the throats of their own mothers were there profits to be made. They know of the 'Black Knight' at the ford and of the other knights in the cave, but they have not made any connection between the two. Although they are scared of the Black Knight and what he might represent, they will make no deals with the PCs, preferring to stick with the 'old methods' of ambushing anyone who comes within their woods. Hugh knows the location of the abandoned trolls' lair, and that there are further tunnels beyond it, although he is too scared to enter. He will trade this information for his life.

THE ABANDONED TROLL HOLE

This hole, hidden behind a boulder, has lain untouched over the last century, and contains quite a small amount of treasure considering the raid the trolls carried out on a then-wealthy town. Among the rotted clothing, bones, mildewed casks and other worthless items are scattered 200 gold coins, and a gold chain of office. This was the mayoral chain when Oakhelm was a prosperous town, and has the effect of increasing the wearer's impact on followers (increase charisma related abilities by up to 20%).

Inscribed on one wall of the troll hole are a set of magical runes, which are unintelligible to any form of magic at most times. During times of change in the moon's phase (new, full, and the two waxing and waning phases when only half the moon is visible) the runes can be read, and their nature is such that they will cause any reader to be filled with a terrible fury (subject to whatever resistance to magic checks are appropriate to the game system). The reader will a irresistable desire to despoil and destroy the nearest evidence of civilization - it was the effect of these runes that made the trolls descend upon Oakhelm in the first place. If an of the PCs are in the trolls' lair at the appropriate time they will feel a similar urge to fall upon the village and destroy it.

At the back of the cave, hidden beneath a particularly smelly pile of rubbish is a trapdoor,

which will collapse if any great weight is placed upon it. Beneath the trapdoor is a shaft leading down to a passage that leads into the tunnels and passageways of Alunal the Mage.

ALUNAL THE MAGE

It was Alunal who was responsible for placing the runes on the wall of the trolls' lair and subsequently it was he and his familiar that removed much of the wealth that the trolls had accumulated. Alunal was a corrupt and dishonest man, and felt no sympathy for the townsfolk whose livelihoods he was wrecking. However, shortly after the trolls were destroyed, and Alunal had taken the knights' swords, he was killed in a completely unrelated accident, when a port- ion of the tunnel roof fell on his head and broke his neck. His undying greed and petty malice have kept his spirit alive through the years, and he now roams the passages as a ghost-like creature. There is a cumulative chance of 5% per hour that Alunal's spirit, a tall, imposing figure that will cause unease in anyone seeing it, will be encountered.

His mouldering bones now lie beneath a small heap of stones and rock. The tattered robes on the body were once fine, and the skeleton still has a gold ring on one finger (the key to his treasure chamber), and a staff beside it. Should this corpse be destroyed or removed from the tunnel, Alunal would be freed after his century of wandering within his passages. However, the ghost is too greedy to allow anything to be taken away without a fight.

THE PASSAGES

1. After the site of Alunal's death, the passage continues onwards, and becomes dank, cold and very unpleasant. Being a cautious man, Alunal took precautions against the trolls, and on one wall of the passage is carved a stylised and savage face, while beath is a faded and semi-legible inscription: *- - -t -e under pr--s--e would b- yo-r do-nfal-* (To put me under pressure would be your downfall). The face was intended to make the trolls reluctant to go any further, while the inscription is a reference to the pit trap that awaits ahead.

2. The pit trap is old and no longer functions properly, so that even if it is stood on it will drop only an inch before becoming wedged in the hole below. However, the problem with the trap is that a troll became trapped down it a century ago. Since then, it has been - for want of a better term - alternately 'hibernating' and working its way back up to the top of the hole. Should anyone step onto the pit trap, it will sense this and attack through the 'lid'.

3. This chamber is completely empty. The secret door in the west wall is relatively easy to detect as its hinges have rusted and slipped, but this also means that the door is very hard to open (half normal chance of doing so).

4. The room is bare of all ornamentation, except for a murky looking pool in the centre of the floor. At the bottom of the pool can be seen the gleam of gold and jewelry...

The water itelf is fairly harmless, although it is green, slimy and smells decayed and faintly acidic. Metalwork dipped into the water will show signs of corrosion almost immediately and if the water comes into contact with the skin, there is a 50% chance that some form of disease (your discretion) will be contracted. The 'gold and jewelry' at the bottom of the pool is illusionary, although the creature that 'lives' there - a large undead fish motivated by Alunal's power - will not take kindly to anybody who pokes and prods in the water...

5. The endless series of caves, chambers and caverns, all heavily coated with stalactites and curtains of stone, run miles beneath the hills. Unless the PCs mark the caves as they pass through, they will rapidly become lost in the never-ending series of similar and confusing chambers. You may make the cave system as large as you like, inhabited by whatever creatures are appropriate to your campaign. Only by taking the right hand path at all times from the door out of the first chamber in Alunal's complex can the treasure room be found.

6. This iron door is very rusty, and apparently without a key. Carved onto its outer face is a large, hideous face with a protruding tongue. Placing Alunal's ring on the tongue will open the door (and a slight, circular depression in the tongue can be seen where the ring should go). Any other object placed on the tongue - or attempting to open the door will cause the door to reveal its true self as a (now rather rusty) iron construct. Although it cannot move, anyone within 10′ is vulnerable to its attacks.

7. This is Alunal's treasure chamber, and it is here that Alunal's spirit will be encountered, along with the undead corpse of his familiar. The spirit will use all its powers to prevent the PCs removing any object from the chamber, even those that are illusionary treasures (see below).

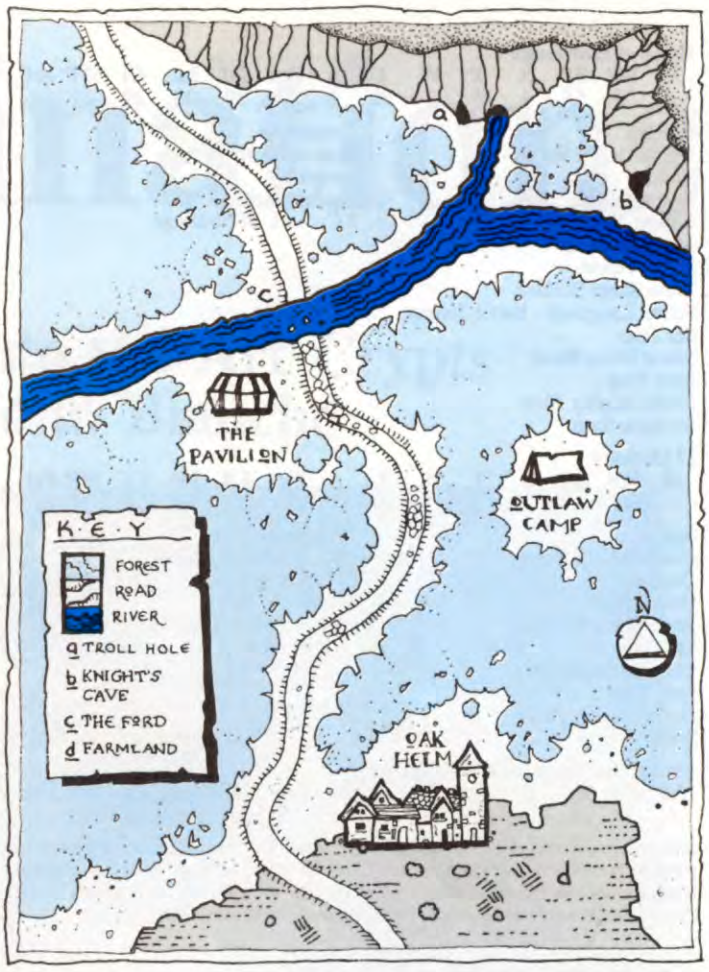
The three swords are clearly recognisable as such, as they rest in a rack and have been carefully wrapped in oiled cloth and protected from the worst excesses of years of damp in the passages. The blades are still in excellent condition, and the knights will be happy to receive the swords in this state.

The rest of the treasure within the room is in a sorry state. Much of the cloth was once quite valuable and finely decorated, but it has rotted over the years. There are several mildewed bags of coins scattered about, each apparently containing some 150 gold coins in various denominations. However, there is a 50% chance that each bag is actually an illusion and, should it be exposed to sunlight, its true nature as a bag of earth and stones will be revealed.

STATISTICS

AD&D

The Seven Black Knights: AC 2; MV 9"; Fighter 4; hp 30 each; AT 1 weapon; Int Ave; AL LN; Size M; xp 240 each; armed with lances, broadswords and maces; all have heavy warhorses (AC 4; MV 15"; HD 3+3; hp 20 each; AT 3; D 1-8/1-8/1-3).



Hugh of Lowbough: AC 6; MV 12"; Fighter 5; hp 19; AT 1 weapon; Int Ave; AL CN; Size M; xp 264; armed with longbow, shortsword and 3 daggers; 4 100gp gems.

17 Outlaws: AC 7; MV 12"; Fighter 1; hp 6 each; AT 1 weapon; Int Ave-Low; AL CN(E); Size M; xp 32 each; armed with longbows, clubs and/or shortswords. 1d6gp each.

Alunal The Mage: AC 6; MV 12"; HD 3+3; hp 28; AT 1; D 2-5 plus strength drain; SA spells - *magic missile (x2), shield, web, hold person*; Int Ave; AL CE; Size M; xp 567; cf shadow MMp86; Alunal also has the use of his *staff of striking* (1 charge) which is still by his body.

Hibernating Troll: AC 4; MV 12"; HD 6+6; hp 40; AT 3; D 5-8/5-8/2-12; SD Regeneration; Int Low; AL CE; Size L; xp 845.

Undead Fish: AC 8; MV //6"; HD 2; hp 16; AT 1; D 1-8; Int Non; AL N; Size S; xp 52; cf zombie MMp103.

The Iron Door: AC 1; MV 0"; hp 40; AT 1 tongue (10' range); D 1-12; SD immune to all mind influencing, electrical, heat and cold based attacks, +1 or better weapons to hit; Int Non; AL N; Size L; xp 1080.

Undead Familiar: AC 6; MV 12"; HD 1; hp 6; AT 1; D 1-4; Int Non; AL CE; Size S; xp 12; damage done to the familiar is also done to Alunal.

Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay

The Seven Black Knights

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
4	63	35	6	4	11	50	1	29	59	39	59	29	39

Skills
Dodge Blow
Ride - Horse
Specialist Weapon - Lance
Strike Mighty Blow
Strike to Stun
Strike to Injure

Trappings
Plate Armour and closed helmet
Lance
Shield
Sword
Mace

Warhorses

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
8	33	0	5	3	11	30	1	-	10	10	10	10	-

Hugh of Lowbough

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
4	53	55	4	5	1	50	2	39	59	39	39	29	39

Skills
Concealment Rural
Disarm
Dodge Blow
Follow Trail
Marksmanship
Ride - Horse
Scale Sheer Surface
Secret Language - Battle Tongue
Set Trap
Silent Move Rural
Spot Trap
Strike Mighty Blow
Strike to Stun

Trappings
Bow and Ammunition
Sword
Leather Jerkin
3 Crowns, 14 Shillings

17 Outlaws

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
4	43	35	3	3	9	40	1	29	29	29	39	29	29

Skills
Concealment Rural
Disarm
Dodge Blow
Scale Sheer Surface
Set Trap
Silent Move Rural
Spot Trap
Strike Mighty Blow
Strike to Stun

Trappings
Bow and Ammunition
Sword or axe
Shield
50% chance of Leather Jerkin
D10 shillings

Alunal the Mage (now a Wight)

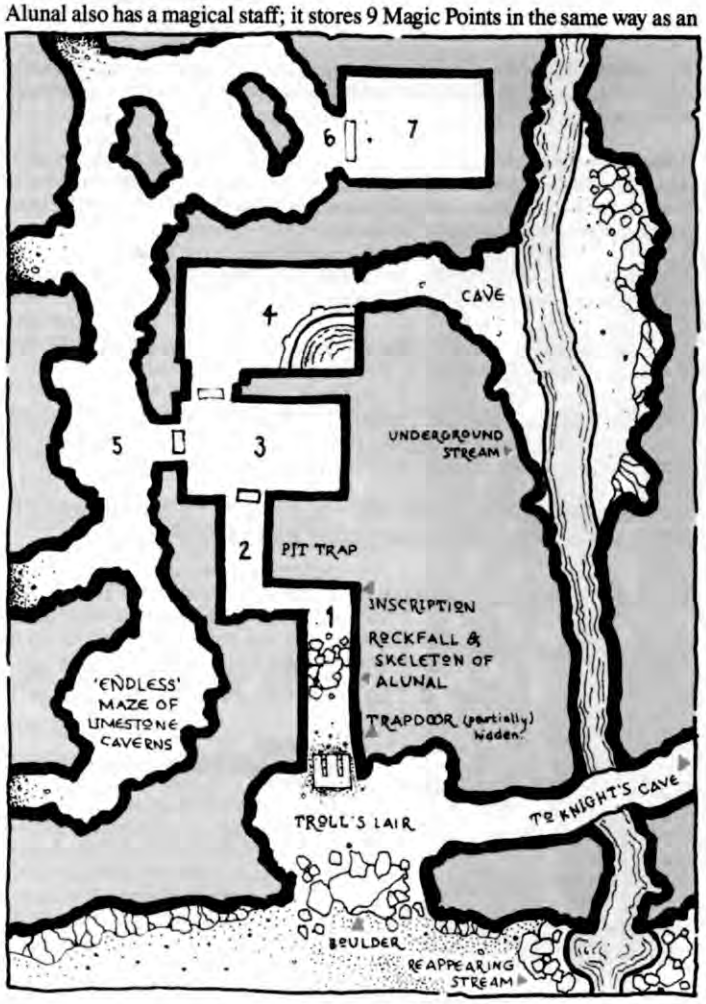
M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
4	33	0	3	4	17	30	1	18	18	18	18	18	-

Alunal has 3 *Strength* and 3 Magic Points when first encountered. He must expend Magic Points to remain active, at the rate of 2 points per round of combat. If he manages to accumulate enough Magic Points, he is still able to cast spells; the available spells are Aura of Resistance, Fire Ball and Steal Mind.

The components for the spells are still on Alunal's body, and retrieving the components for each spell counts as a *take-up* action.

As a Wight, Alunal causes *Fear* in all living creatures. He is not subject to *Instability* while in the passages.

Alunal also has a magical staff; it stores 9 Magic Points in the same way as an *Energy Jewel*. Alunal may use the Magic Points to maintain his physical form, or to cast spells, as the GM desires. The staff is capable of wounding creatures which are immune to normal weapons, even when drained of Magic Points.



Hibernating Troll

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
4	33	25	4	4	10	10	2	14	89	14	89	89	10

The Troll is subject to all the special rules given in the *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* rulebook.

Undead Fish

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
4	25	0	3	3	5	10	1	-	43	14	14	14	-

The M score shown is for movement in water; the fish cannot leave the pool. Any wounds caused by the fish have a 20% chance of causing *Tomb Rot*; wounds that do not cause Tomb Rot have a 50% chance of causing *Infected Wounds*. The fish is controlled by the spirit of Alunal, and becomes subject to *Instability* once Alunal is destroyed or when it is out of water.

The Iron Door

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
0	73	0	6	6	29	10	1	-	-	-	-	-	-

The door is immune to all attacks based on heat, cold and electricity, to magical attacks affecting the mind, and to normal weapons.

Undead Familiar

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Dex	Ld	Int	Cl	WP	Fel
4	25	0	1	3	3	20	1	-	18	18	18	18	-

Because of the magical relationship between Alunal and his familiar, damage done to the familiar is also subtracted from Alunal's *Wounds* score. It becomes subject to *Instability* if Alunal is destroyed.

Pendragon

The Seven Black Knights

Heavy Chain Armour	10 pts	Battle	14
Total Hit Points	24	Lance	14
Major Wound	12	Ride	14
Unconcious	6	Sword	14
Knockdown	12	Joust	14
Move	3	Horse type	Charger
Damage	4d6	Horse move	8
Healing	2	Horse damage	6d6

Hugh of Lowbough

Cuirboulli Armour	6 pts	Battle	8
Total Hit Points	24	Sword	13
Major Wound	10	Bow	12
Unconcious	6	Dagger	10
Knockdown	14	Damage	4d6
Move	2	Healing	2

17 Bandits

None	0 pts	Battle	5
Total Hit Points	20	Spear	12
Major Wound	10	Bow	10
Unconcious	5	Damage	3d6
Knockdown	10	Healing	2
Move	2		

Alunal The Mage

Armour (Ethereal)	8 pts	Hands	10
Total Hit Points	20	Move	4
Major Wounds	10	Damage	4
Unconcious	5	Healing	N/A
Knockdown	N/A		

Armour is based on the fact that Alunal is insubstantial. Magical powers are as assigned by the GM from Curse, Glamour and Summoning.

Hibernating Troll (Giant)

Armour	6pts	Club	10
Total Hit Points	40	Grapple	12
Major Wound	20	(does 3d6 damage)	
Unconcious	10	Damage	6d6
Knockdown	20	Healing	4
Move	6		

The Iron Door

Armour	30	Tongue	16
Total Hit Points	100	Damage	3d6

Undead Familiar

No Armour	0 pts	Hands	10
Total Hit Points	16	Move	3
Major Wounds	8	Damage	2d6
Unconcious	4	Healing	N/A
Knockdown	N/A		

Undead Fish

No Armour	0 pts	Bite	10
Total Hit Points	16	Damage	3d6
Major Wounds	8		

Illuminations

A Foray into the Art Crypts
By John Blanche

Judging by the weight of post that we receive round here from aspiring artists and people going 'Oooh-er' at one piccy (a technical term for a drawing or other piece of artwork) or another, fantasy artwork is a growing part of roleplaying games.

Only a tiny proportion of the art that passes in and out of the Design Studio – where *White Dwarf* is put together – ever makes it onto the magazine's pages. Even when adventures and roleplaying games are counted as well, there still isn't a lot of opportunity to print really good fantasy art for gamers to see. Which is a pity.

The art content of games and adventures is something that gets ignored - or at least this is so in many cases. It's only when the illustrations are poor, or not there at all, that you really notice them. Good work seems so much part of the whole product that it fades into the background. This is hardly fair on the artist, who has often had to work for many, many hours to produce a single piece of art. Often, he will not know exactly what he is supposed to be drawing... so it's even more remarkable when the images and the printed word come together.

The Origin Of Fire

Warhammer Role Play

Realm Of Chaos

Illuminations will try to redress the situation, by featuring the work of one or more artists in every column.

John Sibbick's art has been featured on the cover of *White Dwarf* and *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*.

A freelance artist for the last 12 years, his work has covered a wide range of subject matter from Indian Mythology to encyclopedias on dinosaurs. His other work has included Fighting Fantasy covers for Puffin books, Time-Life magazine and various projects for Games Workshop, of which the most impressive is a stunning cover for *Realm of Chaos*, a major WFRP supplement.

John works primarily in gouache on artist's board, and is well known for his sweeping landscapes and meticulous attention to detail.

John Blanche

Red Dragon

John Sibbick

PSIONIC COMBAT

by Steve Palmer

This article is the sequel to *All in the Mind*, which appeared in *WD79*. It deals mostly with a new psionic combat system, but also touches on other areas of mental ability. It is meant to be used in conjunction with the previous article. While references are made to *AD&D* psionics, these rules will work with any games system.

Psionic Combat

To my mind the problem with psionic combat in the past has been its unnecessary complexity. There are far too many different tables, extenuating circumstances, etc most of which I intend replacing with a much simpler system, but one which still has potential for interest and some strategy.

The idea behind this new system is either to overload your opponent's mind with psychic energy, or to remove all his defence shields. Every natural psionic has a Psionic Strength (PS) of 1d100 plus one for every point of INT, WIS or CHA above 12 (giving a maximum PS of 118). The doubling and quadrupling factor for two or three 17+ abilities is scrapped — every psionic will therefore have a PS range of 5 - 118 (since a minimum score of 16 is still required in one of the above three abilities). PS is used when using abilities and in psionic combat. Latent psionics can never engage in combat, but use up their (limited) PS when their abilities are active. The numbers given in *WD70* for ability costs can be switched straight from old-style STR to PS.

Compulsors get 1d6 added to their PS, whilst soliptors add 1d6 to PT (see below), commensurate with these particular two classes.

Every psionic also has the use of the seven defence shields. These absorb psychic energy, but are lost if their energy handling capability is equalled or exceeded. Every psionic can use these shields in any order, one at a time, providing the energy handling capability (EHC) has not been equalled or exceeded. A shield is used against one discrete psychic energy attack (see *Table 1*).

Table 1

Type	*Cost to deploy (PS)*	*EHC*
alpha	-	1
betta	-	2
gamma	-	3
delta	-	6
mu	1	10
theta	3	15
pi	5	22

As can be seen, the four lowest EHC shields cost nothing to use, but the most powerful three do, draining points from the individual's PS. In each combat round, the opponents throw a bolt of psychic energy at each other, ie PS. The bolt may be absorbed by a shield, in which case the amount is knocked off the shield's EHC. If it equals or exceeds the shield's current (or initial) EHC, it is temporarily blown away, and in the latter case, the excess points have to be contained by the psionic. If he takes too much energy his mind will overload and he will be tempararily inactive. This is one of the ways of defeating your opponent.

Each psionic has a Psionic Threshold (PT) which, if equalled or exceeded, means his mind has 'gone nova'. The PT is one third of the person's PS (fractions are rounded to the nearest whole number), plus a random factor. Psionics add a d6 to their PT, master psionics add 2d6, and the upper two types add 3d6. If the opponent loses all his shields, the same system is applied and he is temporarily inactive (see *Table 2*) — this is the other way to defeat your opponent.

There is also the possibility of a draw or stalemate. This happens when both opponents have any of shields alpha to delta, but no PS. In this case there is simply no final result. Also, it is not compulsory to throw PS every round, though a defence shield *must* be put up. However, if both combatants throw no points on three consecutive rounds the combat is considered to be at an end — this is a stalemate. Note that providing one psionic throws at least one PS point, the other can throw none for as many rounds as he likes. Only when both throw nothing is it a stalemate. After a stalemate, psionic combat can only restart on the next *melee* round, should this be possible. Note also that if a person's current PS is 0 the mu, theta and pi shields are considered automatically lost, though he can defend until the other four have gone. Indeed the opponent cannot win until the defender's lower four shields are gone (or the PT is exceeded).

Table 2

Initial PS	*Result if PT equalled or exceeded or all shields lost*
5-50	Dazed 10 - 40 minutes (d4x10)
51-80	Stunned 30 - 60 minutes (d4+2 x10)
81-99	Unconscious 2 - 5 hours (d4+1)
100+	Coma 11 - 20 hours (d10+10)

The difference between unconsciousness and coma is that unconscious persons can be brought round (though with great difficulty), whereas persons in coma are completely out. Dazed psionics can do easy or non-intellectual things, such as running away; stunned persons are pretty much able to help themselves. After the effect has run its course, the

psionic is at 0 PS, with all defense shields on full EHC.

So, how does combat work? I suggest that the following chart is drawn up:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
point throw	*psychic energy throw, in PS*											*round numbers*
PS	*current total*											
shield up	*currently used shield*											
alpha												
beta												
gamma												
delta												
mu												
theta												
pi												
PT	*starts at 0*											

On round one (each round lasts 1/60 of a melee round), the character fills in how much PS he wants to throw at his opponent, up to the limit of 22; one psionic can *never* throw more than 22 points. Then he fills in which shield he wants to use, and his new PS total. The opponent does the same. Then they compare defences with points thrown, and determine the results. Then round two begins. Below is a sample combat between two opponents, Nodonn and Abadon. A star indicates the shield is lost, its EHC equalled or exceeded; the numbers indicate the EHC left to that shield — how much PS the opponent needs to throw for it to be lost.

Abadon(PS *102*, PT *45*)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
point throw	*15*	*12*	*2*	*7*	*6*	*10*	*8*	*6*	*19*
PS	*82*	*65*	*60*	*50*	*43*	*33*	*25*	*19*	*0*
shield up	*pi*	*pi*	*th*	*th*	*mu*	*de*	*ga*	*be*	*al*
alpha									*
beta								*	
gamma							*		
delta						*			
mu					*				
theta			7	*					
pi	12	*							
PT	-	-	-	*1*	*1*	*7*	*14*	*14*	*14*

Nodonn (PS *99*, PT *35*)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
point throw	*10*	*12*	*8*	*8*	*10*	*12*	*10*	*2*	*1*
PS	*88*	*76*	*65*	*54*	*43*	*29*	*19*	*12*	*6*
shield up	*mu*	*de*	*th*	*th*	*th*	*ga*	*be*	*pi*	*pi*
alpha									
beta							*		
gamma						*			
delta		*							
mu	*								
theta			13	6	*				
pi								16	*
PT	*5*	*11*	*11*	*11*	*11*	*18*	*24*	*24*	*27*

In this combat, Abadon decides to use his biggest shields first, even though it will be expensive, whilst Nodonn decides to chop and change to try and outwit his opponent. In round one, Abadon's pi shield is hit for 10, so it drops to 12 from 22. He throws 15 at Nodonn, who, because he chose his mu shield, has it blown away and has to contain the extra five points. In round two, Nodonn guesses that Abadon's pi will stay, so throws 12 points at it — it blows, but no extra points need to be contained by Abadon. Nodonn's delta gets 12 points thrown at it, so it collapses and he has to contain a further 12-6=6 points, making his PT score 11. He decides to use a theta on round three, knocking off the extra 3 points. This carries on as shown. On round six, Nodonn forget that he needn't have thrown 12 points; Abadon's best shield available is a six-point delta. All Nodonn needs to do is blow it away, and conserve his points. On round seven he makes this mistake again. On round nine, Abadon guesses his alpha will go, and he'll be subject to coma, so he throws all his remaining PS at Nodonn's pi, hoping this will be blown away, and his enemy's PT equalled or exceeded. The pi goes, but Nodonn manages to stay under his PT of 35. However he blows away Abadon's alpha, and wins the combat by virtue of removing all Abadon's shields. He is left with 6 PS,

which could be used for his abilities.

There is no range as such for psionic combat, but the opponents must be within sight of each other — however far away this is (this assumes one or both know the other is psionic). Note that certain perceptors can initiate combat at practically infinite distances, making them very dangerous! If a combatant tries to get out of sight (by hiding behind a tree for example), this will never work since the other will mentally know where he is. Once combat is in progress, sight isn't required.

Note that if a psionic tries to initiate combat with a non-psionic, the PS he would have thrown on round one is simply lost, and the other person's type is then known. In this case, non-psionic includes latents, since they cannot engage in psionic combat.

Withdrawal From Combat

It is possible to withdraw from combat, but the combatant who does this will be at quite a disadvantage. If this course is chosen, the person cannot throw any PS at his opponent, but he must defend using one shield of alpha to delta. The opponent can attack as normal but need only put up a non-costing shield (alpha-delta), he knows no energy is coming his way. The withdrawer must declare his intention at the very beginning of the round that he intends to do so. Almost the only thing the withdrawing character can do is try to offput his opponent, but he may *only* use a psionic ability since each round is so short — there is no chance of him doing anything in 'real time'. Possible abilities might be *domination* (providing the victim is within range), *telempathic projection*, etc. Alternatively, the withdrawer can try to escape via a psionic ability — eg *teleportation*. If offputting is chosen, the opponent makes a save, and if he fails, the psionic combat is ended for that *melee round* (see *Table 3*). If one of the two combatants wants to restart it on the next melee round however, this *must* happen, providing the two opponents are in sight of each other. If the opponent makes his save, combat *must* continue as normal on the next psionic round.

Table 3

Psionic's degree	*save (d20)*
1 - 3	7
4 - 6	5
7 - 8	4
9 - 10	3
11 - 12	2

Multiplexing

Multiplexing is the melding together of two or more minds to gain strength and organisation, the result of this action being greater than the sum of its parts. However, it is a very difficult and occasionally hazardous operation, and may only be attempted by a group that contains at least one member of master psionic status or above. It is not limited to psionic combat however — it is quite possible to increase range, duration or power of abilities by multiplexing, though in these cases the psionics must all have the ability in question.

First, abilities. All four levels of ability can be changed dramatically by multiplexing. Ranges, durations, relative powers or strengths can all be vastly increased, depending on the number of units in the multiplex, their degrees, and a random factor. The result is in terms of a percentage increase. The starting number is the random element, thrown as 1d100 (see *Table 4*).

Table 4

d100 *x numbers in multiplex x average of degrees*

Example — Three master psionics need to *scry* a group of revolutionaries on the other side of a sea. Normally one master psionic could do this as the ability has almost unlimited range. However, the need is urgent, so they want to reduce the time taken as much as possible. They go into the multiplex, and the DM rolls the dice - 70. This is multiplied by three, the number in the multiplex, and by the average of their degrees - 6, 8 and 9 means an average of 7.7 or 8 to the nearest whole number. Thus the time needed to scry is reduced by (70 x 3 x8)% or 1680%; quite a difference! The PS cost is shared equally by the psionics, though when one PS runs out (at this reduced rate), the multiplex will collapse. In this case, each master contributes a third of the normal PS cost of scrying.

An alternative way of looking at this example is to say that the distance mentally traversable is a given time is increased by 1680% — it amounts to the same thing. Note that it is at the GM's discretion as to whether a particular

aspect of an ability may be increased by this method. For example, you might not want the range of *Possession* increased, since this might unbalance the game — as usual, it is up to individual GMs to decide.

If there are three or more in the multiplex, one of the characters can take the role of organiser of the others (as long as they trust him to do this). If this is attempted, the most powerful type takes the role (if more than one, either will be able to do this). The person counts neither his presence nor his degree of multiplex. Instead the final percentage result of the others is multipled by half his degree (round up but take a minimum factor of two). The role has certain dangers; since the organiser is taking most of the responsibility of the multiplex, the psychic energy goes through him. At the end of the event, he must roll under his degree on 1d12, and if this is failed he loses 4d10 PS for 9-12 days, plus 3d4 CON for the same time. The organiser is entirely in control of the operation, and the other psionic units cannot change what he does with his power - thus a certain amount of trust is required.

In combat, multiplexing will ensure that the final result is greater than the sum of the parts. The psionics, including at least one Master, multiplex their minds and their PSs are added. To this is added 1d10 per unit in the multiplex; the barrier of 118 can be exceeded in this situation. The seven shields are still available, but their capabilities are multiplied by the unit number minus 1 — eg three masters in a multiplex would use a pi with capability (22x(3-1)) or 44. The maximum points throw is the unit number times 22 — ie. 66 for a three unit multiplex, 88 for a four and so on. Upper level shield costs are also multiplied by the number in the multiplex; ie. a pi would cost 15 PS to use for a three-psionic multiplex, etc. PT's are also added, plus 1d6 per member. At the end of the event, the remaining PS is shared out equally between the members of the multiplex, subject to their personal maximums. All the above statistics are enumerated in *Table 5*.

Table 5

unit number	*max.PS-throw*	*shield EHC's (alpha-pi)*	*upper shield costs mu*	*theta*	*pi*
2	44	1,3,4,9,15,22,33	2	6	10
3	66	2,4,6,12,20,30,44	3	9	15
4	88	3,6,9,18,30,45,66	4	12	20
5	110	4,8,12,24,40,60,88	5	15	25

For multiplexes of three and above, one member can try to organise the others, much as with abilities (above). He adds neither PS, PT, nor his extra d10 and d6. The remaining sums are both multiplied by a factor from *Table 6* , which will make quite a difference to the final PS and PT. As such a large amount of energy is going through him, he must roll under his degree on a d20 in order not to lose 6d10 PS and 4d4 CON for 21-30 days, at the end of the combat. Note that 0 or less CON means death, though 0 or less PS can be survived.

Table 6

organiser's degree	*multiplier*
1 - 8	2
9 - 11	2.5
12	3

Note than an organiser can be offput according to the withdrawal rules above. If he fails to make his save, the multiplex collapses. The opponent who offput the organiser must himself be the organiser of another multiplex, or a solo psionic himself - the individual multiplexed members play no part in this, being the raw material shaped by the organiser. If an organiser uses a psionic discipline to escape, the multiplex collapses. In both of these cases psionic combat may restart on the next *melee round*. As before, if the organiser makes his save against being offput, the combat continues as normal.

Multiplexing may also be used to combine PSs so the result exceeds 100; then the multiplex can strike at non-psionics as if they each normally had the ability. Again, to do this there must be at least one Master psionic in the group. The results and PS-throws are exactly as before. When entering the multiplex, 1d6 is added per member, and as before PS must be at least 100 before and after the throw. The barrier of 118 cannot be exceeded. The members of the multiplex must all be in sight of each other to initiate the event. When complete, the remaining PS points are shared equally amongst the members, up to their individual maximums. One member should be designated as the actual aggressor — a multiplex cannot chop and change with respect to this.

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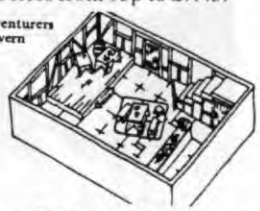

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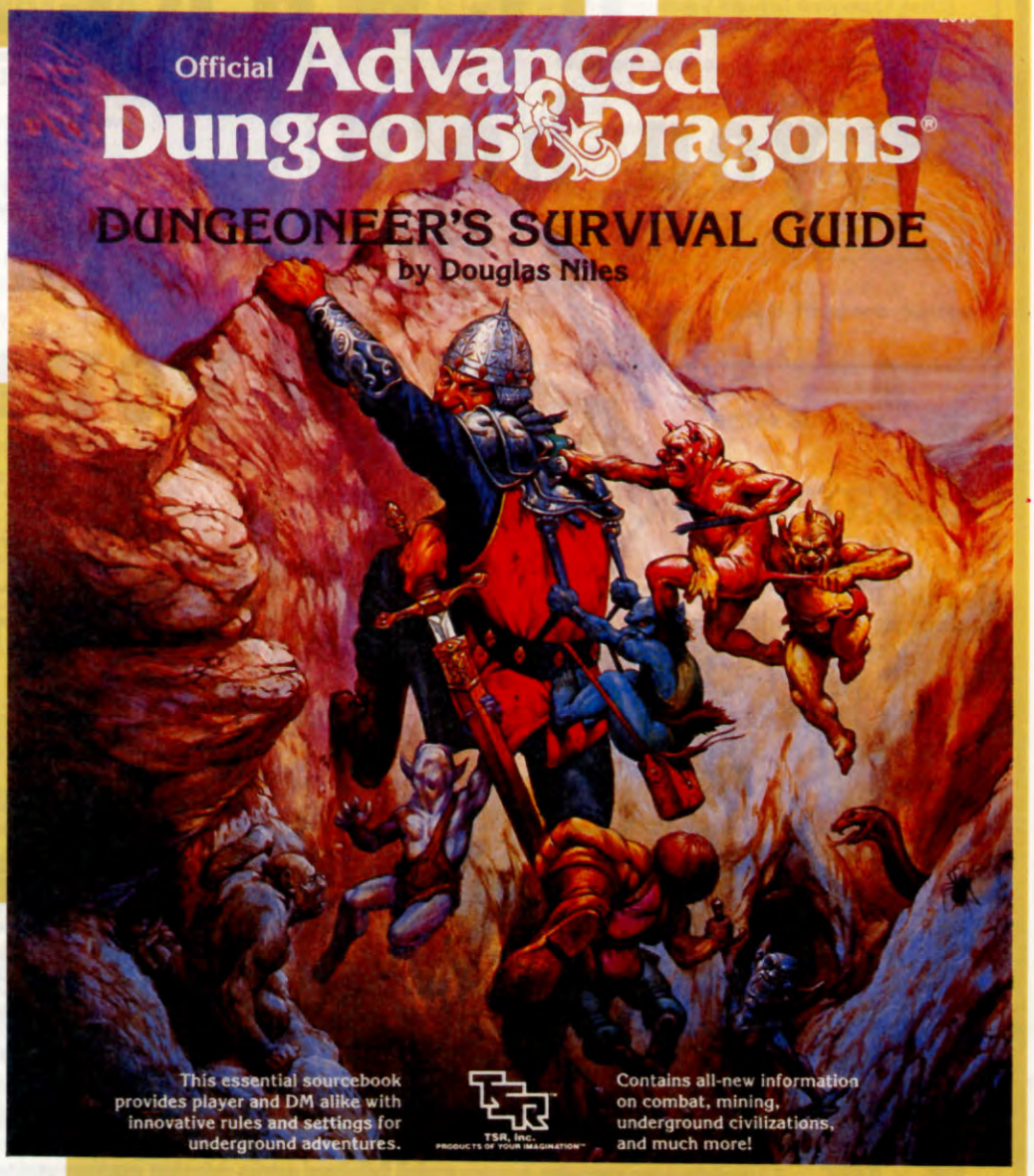

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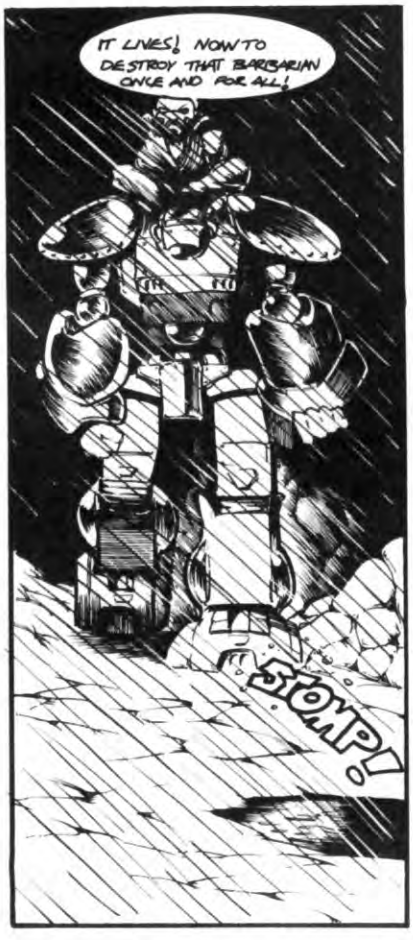

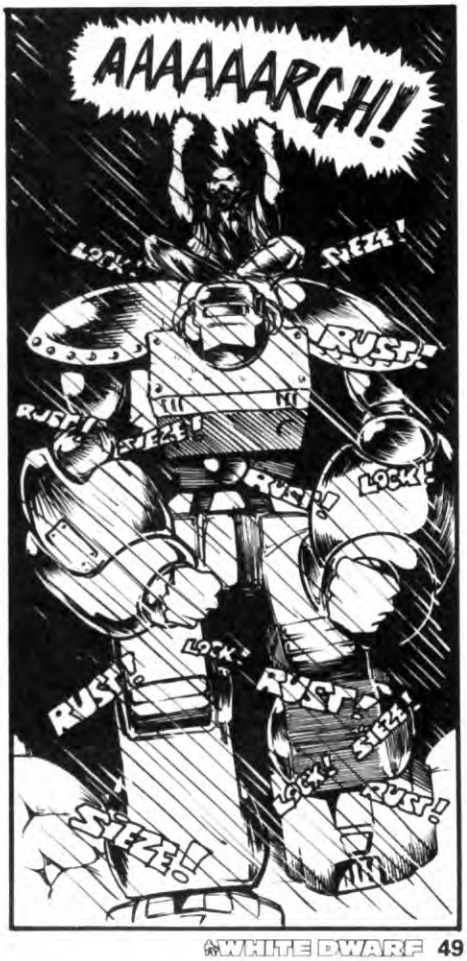

Fig 1-8: *Kevin Adams' New Gothic Horror Miniatures.*
Fig 9: *Naismith's Excellent hard line work on the C100 Space Marine Range.*
Fig 10: *A selection of Kev Adams' New Goblins.*
Fig 11: *Jes Goodwin's Chaos Sorceror & familiars.*
Fig 12-14: *Ali Morrison's latest additions to the troll range.*
Fig 15: *Trish Morrison's Magnificent New Dragon (don't worry folks it will have Wings, honest).*
Fig 16: *Another Jes Goodwin construction: The Manitcore.*
Fig 17-18: *Various Armatures.*

Fig 1 *Fig 2* *Fig 3* *Fig 4* *Fig 5* *Fig 6* *Fig 7* *Fig 8*

Fig 9

Fig 10

Fig 11

Fig 12

Fig 13

Fig 14

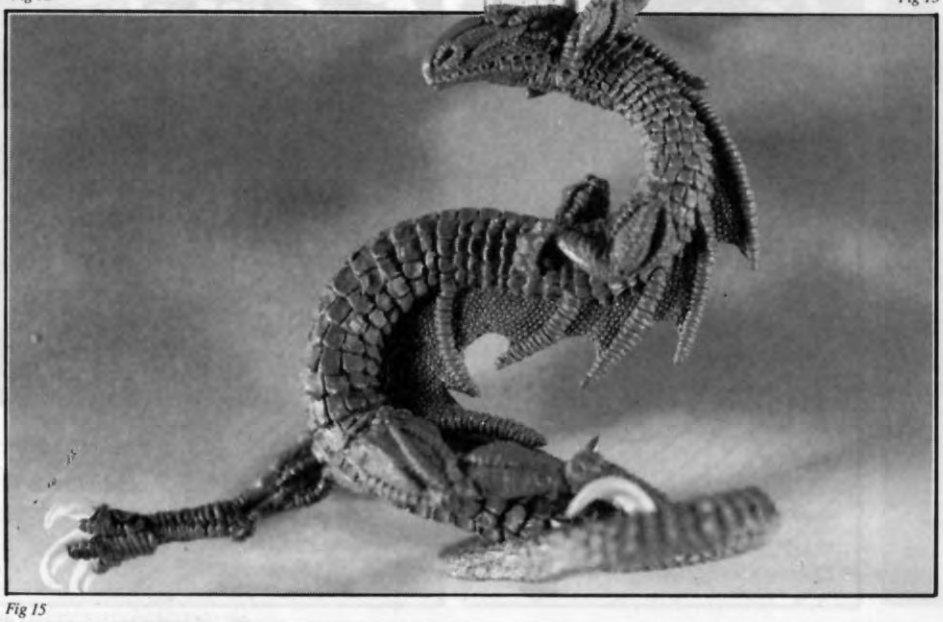
Fig 15

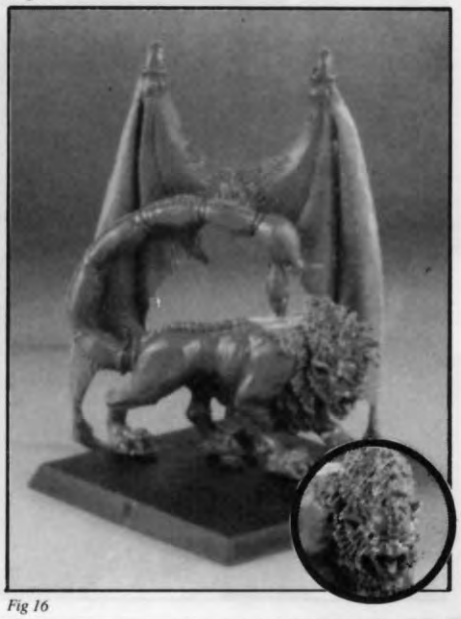
Fig 16

This Month: Birth of the Figure

There are several ways of making a ***Citadel*** *figure designer very cross. One is to threaten his favourite bottle of strong drink... Another is to suggest that, perhaps, the masterpiece he has just created could do with just a few more spikey bits... Or you could - and this is really dangerous - ask him why he paints all the figures green... The reply will be very illuminating.*

Figure designers are sensitive people.

On the other hand, they are fairly, well, very talented. Without them, there wouldn't be any figures to lavish paint upon. The tame Citadel loonies, err, designers, are an extremely talented bunch. And that, they claim, is official. But who are they?

Kevin Adams is the latest addition to the design group, and the owner of the world's heaviest feet. Although from Cambridge, Kevin has specialised in designing Goblins and vaguely goblinoid creatures (the snotlings, for example). Even as you read this, Kev will be proving that it ain't just Gobboes that he can design, with a new batch of Gothic Horror figures, even more Zombies and a four-wheeled wagon for adventurers. However, just to keep his hand in, Kev will be producing some extra Goblin Fanatics.

Jes Goodwin's work for *Asgard* was well-regarded (not to say drooled over) before he ever joined *Citadel*. Classics such as the Skaven, the Eternal Champion Boxed Set and the latest Ogres are all his handiwork. He's just finished doing some Silvan (wood) Elves for Middle-earth and a selection of Mind Flayers for the AD&D range. There are, apparently, only so many things you can do with a face full of tentacles... The next figures from his clever little fingers include a Manticore, a series of distinctly bizzare Chaos Wizards and Familiars and a crew for the new Elf Chariot.

Aly Morrison is, among other things, terribly Scottish. A wierd eye problem has kept him away from figure production, but he is currently venting his talents upon a new range of trolls and a few odd wizards. Also in Aly's pipeline (if you'll forgive the expression) are another group of Talisman figures to complement the latest expansion kit for the game. Add to this some (shush, secret) figures for a soon to be announced new game from GW, and you'd think the wee chappie had never been out of the model soldier game.

Trish Morrison is mildly Scottish - perhaps it's infectious. In her 2½ years as a Citadel designer, she has committed numerous acts of designing, and been responsible for the perpetration of a number of figures. These include the massive Villagers range, the Judge Dredd Perps and the Gothic Horror figures. She asks that several other figure ranges be taken into consideration,

Fig 17

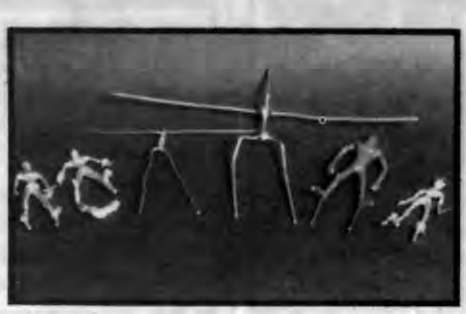

Fig 18

including Uglies and Fatties for Dredd, a Dragon, Orc crewmen for the Bolt Thrower and even more Villagers...

Bob Naismith is also Scottish - obviously a major qualification to make figures. Bob was left in a washing basket outside Citadel two years ago, and since then has been turning out figures, almost without being asked. The Dark Elves, Judge Dredd and the Space Marines are products of his warped mind... On his desk at the moment (hidden beneath all the rubbish) are some new Minotaurs, an Elf Chariot, a Brit-Cit Judge and a Giant (EEEK!) Spider. Bob maintains that it's none of his business mate, he just sort of does it...

Alan and **Michael Perry** have worked for Citadel since their school days, and have never stopped. Rather than list everything that they have done, it's far simpler to say that if the other designers aren't to blame, the twins did it. They produce figures the same way they speak - very quickly! Flying off their benches at the moment are some Normans, a range of definitive horses, some Judge Dredd figures, some Dwarf Adventurers, Germanic tribesmen and one or two limited edition figures. However, they aren't very Scottish at all. Odd that.

And then, of course, there's the non-Scottish Tony Ackland.

Painting It All Green...

Unfortunately, Citadel figure designers don't actually paint their figures green at all - and this is despite the fact that the one question they are always asked at Dragonmeets is 'Why do you paint your figures green?' The truth is rather more interesting is some ways...

Long before a figure is available to be used in a game, the thing has to be designed by somebody. A production mould has to be made, several thousand castings made and after all that, the model finally makes it into the shops.

The first stage in producing a new figure is to the decision as to what is needed: the concept. This can come from any number of sources from the 'I say, chaps, wouldn't it be a whizzo wheeze if...' comment to a full blown range of figures to support a brand new series of rules in, say, *Warhammer*. Often the new rules and the new figures will be developed in parallel, as the figure designers and the rules writers take ideas off each other. Often this stage includes producing working drawngs and sketches of potential 'looks' for the figures. Some can be rejected immediately, allowing others to be developed onto the next stage.

Although the designers are working on fantasy figures, the next stage is, perhaps, one of the most important to the overall look of the figure - and often determines whether the finished figure looks right or not. The basic anatomy of the model is decided upon, and a wire armature is built for each figure. This is carefully soldered together so that the right proportions for the figure's limbs and body are set - and obvious things like the knees and elbows are in the right places! The feeling of movement in the finished figure is also set at this point, because the degree of animation comes directly from the pose of the armature. The armature is the support for the figure while it is being built - its skeleton, in fact.

Once the armature is finished, work on the rest of the model can start. The bulk of the figure is added using Milliput (a type of epoxy modelling putty). Musculature, for example, is added at this stage in a fairly approximate way, as are such items as voluminous cloaks, pointed hats and the like.

Because of the working qualities of Milliput, it is also used to make objects which have a lot of straight lines and planes. Seige equipment, for example, is built almost entirely from sheets of Milliput and, once it is dry, it can be carved to make items like handguns.

The fine detail of the figure - and usually its complete top surface - is produced using a different two-part epoxy putty which, when mixed, is green. This is what leads to the assumption that all figures are painted green for some arcane and secret reason. It's at this stage that the designer can really shine, adding as much surface detail and personality to a figure as eyes and finger-nimbleness allow. Often some - not much, fortunately - of this detail can be lost during the process of making the mould for the production castings.

Occasionally, several similar figures are required - like the range of AD&D Mind Flayers, for example. When this is the case, the first castings are sent back to the designer for a conversion job. This is why you will come across ranges of figures with similar bodies but completely different heads, or figures who have the same face but radically different armament. It also means that a far larger range of individualised models can be offered than would otherwise be the case.

The final stage on a figure can take anything upwards of a day for the designer - so usually they are working on several figures at once. The final job is to add slottabases and labels to the castings.

From the designers, the figures go off to the production department, so that several master figures can be made, a production mould produced and the figures sold. Which is a lot more work than it sounds.

What is fascinating is that after all the work to produce a new figure, lots of people still rush off and convert them into something completely different...

NEXT MONTH: A TRIP INTO THE DARKEST DISMAL DANK DEPTHS OF DEEPEST ... ER, SHEFFIELD.

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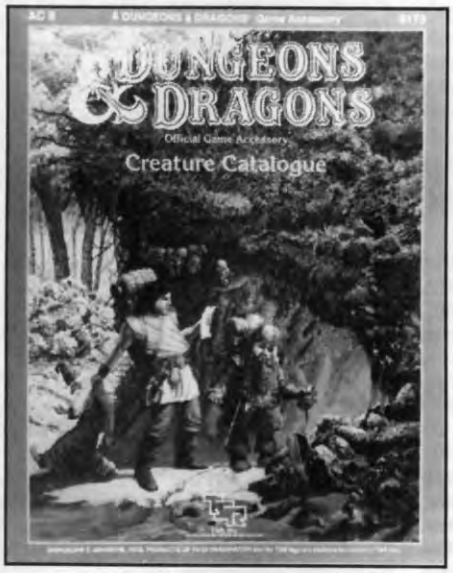

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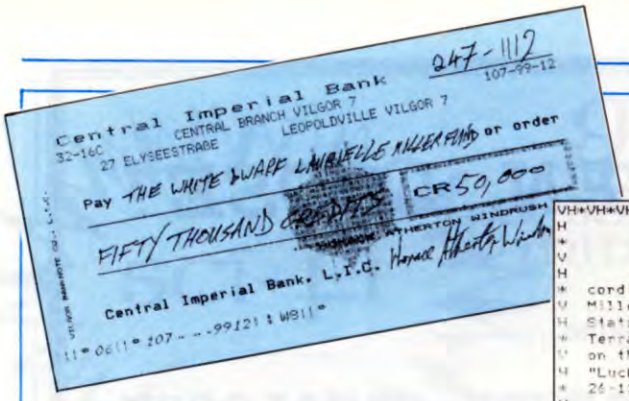

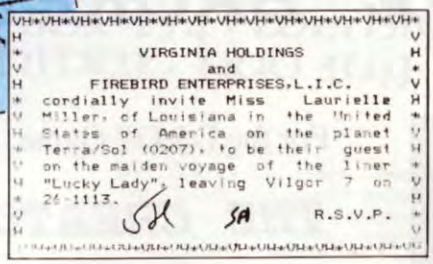

Andrew Butler & others, The Koji Corporation, Teignmouth, Devon, Terra: We enclose a contribution to the fund to fly over Laurielle Miller for Games Day. We hope there will not be too much trouble with the currency conversion. Also, we should be most grateful if you would pass on the enclosed invitation; the reply (if any) should be addressed to the above sub-branch of the Koji Corporation, who are handling Terran bookings. The place aboard the *Lucky Lady* for this VIP trip has been presented by Victoria Hindmarch, President of Virginia Holdings LIC, for services to the cause of Feminine Womanhood everywhere.

Alan Bishop, Herne Bay, Kent: What is it that makes relatively competant male roleplayers gibber and foam at the mouth at the thought/mention/sight of an attractive female player? Haven't any of these drooling humanoids who have screamed for autographs, photos and pieces of her attire ever seen a member of the gaming species who happens to be female? This factor - sometimes known as the Slobbering Maniacs Syndrome - could be the reason why so few female gamers can be seen roleplaying.

James Wallis, Woodbridge, Suffolk: One thing puzzles me. Why is there all this fuss about Laurielle Miller, an American, when Britain has its own favourite fantasy female. I speak, of course, of that *femme fatale* of frp, the delightful designer of dozens of dungeons, the simply stunning, intrepid adventuress and regular WD writer, Fiona Lloyd. Where, pray, is all the fan mail to her? She seems just the sort of person any gamer with his genes in the right place would drool over. Give her the recognition she deserves!

Welcome, citizens, to another edition of the Letters page, that centre of intellectual thought about all that is germaine to gaming. The flood of money that came into the Laurielle Miller fund has paid for a lengthy post-Games Day holiday for the editorial team, and so - rejuvenated - we can tackle anything. Even this:

Brian Duguid, Turriff, Aberdeenshire: I was interested by Robert Povey's comment in WD81. Why should kids admire Judge Dredd? Dredd is Sylvester Stallone in a silly costume. Dredd is evil; Dredd represents tyranny and oppression. Is this the kind of person Robert wants kids to look up to? How about Adolf Hitler? Mussolini? Reagan?

How about independence of thought? Since when do kids *need* a hero to look up to? Perhaps we should be encouraging them to respect their own worth, rather than having to admire others' greatness. The world's problems cannot be solved by shooting them.

Kublai Hoare, London: Why do people consider Judge Dredd a hero? He uses high-explosive bullets when in our time plastic bullets are coming under question. he arrests people without trial and kills people without enquiry. Hitler would have liked him. So why do you print things about a butcher like him?

Craig Oxbrow, Edinburgh: I think it is good that we can admire Judge Dredd. Although Mega-City is a depraved society, Judge Dredd and his fellows bring law to its lawbreakers. He certainly isn't a 'murdering swine'; in his 1984 annual, even Satan has to admit that 'he's the stubbornist case I've ever had to face.'

Ben Young, Ripon, N Yorks: I think the JDrpg system is great, but I can't see the pleasure in playing Judges, wo are emotionless dispensers of Law and Justice. If Robert Povey thinks that children should admire JD (who once beat up and interrogated a juve on the grounds that he was 'acting suspiciously'), then he must have something wrong with his mind. Far better, is it not, to look up to Superman, Indiana Jones, or even Mad Max (someone try to challenge me on that, just try it...). Long live Mike Goldsmith and Stan Lee!

Judge Dredd, Stoulton, Worcs: Actually, I am a murdering swine.

Brian Jones, Plymouth, Devon: Why have there been no articles in WD for the excellent *Chill* rpg? This apparently little-known game is well thought-out, and opens the realms of roleplaying into the previously uncovered ground of the era of gothic horror covered only in those wonderfully ridiculous Vincent Price horror films (ie, 1875-1940/50). *Please* do an article on this Chill-ing game, if only for us sadistic megalomaniac GMs.... ha, ha, ha, haaaa.

But less of this. I move onto the more pressing matter or punishing deviant judges in the JD rpg. I noticed this gap in the game rules, so I developed the following table to discourage rash roleplaying. I find it very useful, and I trust you do too....

Judges Offence	Punishment
Minor Offense	
eg, failure to report in 3 charges	1 charge Reconditioning
Major Offense	
eg, possessing illegal goods	5-15 years on Titan
2nd Major Offense	Life on Titan
Unnecessarily endangering innocent citizens' lives	Retraining - next XPs to be spent on skill failing/lowest skill
Unjust killing of innocent citizens	Frontal lobotomy
Treason	Life on Titan
Judge Killing	Life on Titan
Corruption	20 Years on Titan
Softening of judgement	The Long Walk

One final question. When is *Slaughter Margin* to be released? Where the hell is the *Strontium Dog* rpg? Why are there no supplements available for *Chill*? When will the *Paranoia* book be released? Eh, eh? Find out, then! I want a reply! If I've wasted 17 Creds on something that's going in the bin, I'll -

You have a reality problem here, citizen. Of course your letter has ended up in the bin - recycling is the civic duty of all citizens. Still, at least we managed to ask the relevant questions of those with the power to make decisions here, and they answered your 'last question' with: Next year, in the hands of a brill author and due out late next year maybe, dunno nothing to do with us guv, and what is your security clearance?

A man who's middle name is 'Popular' (a lie; his real middle names are available to anyone who sends a stamped addressed envelope), is our very own Marc Gascoigne, who we foolishly allowed to write this column two months ago. Live roleplayers everywhere are just some of those who have come to know M(P)G and to love him. Read on, and see if I'm not right.

Peter Burden, Hitchen, Herts: I was shocked to read in your latest issue the attitude you profess to hold towards all Lrpgs. I would agree with you that the 'rubber sword' brigade do the hobby no good whatsoever. It is also true that they are prominent targets for attacks from the Press. Something you do not seem to have taken into account are the groups who are not reported in the Press.

Believe me, there are a few groups who are not of the rubber sword and latex mask variety. The group I belong to has evolved over a period of five years to such a stage where we use a great deal of authentic equipment and armour. Even so, we have yet to have an injury of any sort even though we use metal swords and other weapons.

I think you will find that the groups to which you refer are all run on a profit-making basis, and so cannot be so discriminating as to who takes part, and cannot afford to spend many hours on training. Obviously, you cannot know about every group, but I feel offended when lumped in with what you term 'a bunch of loonies'.

Please, in future, try and consider that you may be offending a large number of people in such groups as the Sealed Knot, who for the most part are engaged in a worthwhile and informative hobby. It could be said that people playing rpgs are all schizophrenics escaping from reality, but obviously this would be attacking your readership in an unacceptable manner. This is exactly what you have done in your reponse to Kevin Jacklin's letter.

David Rawlins, Canterbury, Kent: What, may I ask, has live roleplaying done to deserve your scorn? For a long time now, I have seen snide remarks appearing in WD about this most worthwhile hobby. With the recent editorial changes, I thought I had seen the last. Apparently not.

I resent being referred to as one of a 'bunch of loonies who dress in silly costumes and hit each other with rubber swords'. If those comments were made in jest, then I suggest you rethink your position as Editor of the Letters Page. If you have never been live roleplaying, then I suggest you apologise and remedy the fact. The Labyrinthe Club is the most competitive roleplaying environment I have ever had the good fortune to enter.

Your attitude, Mr Gascoigne, stinks of a bigotry I don't expect to find in a 'free' hobby magazine. Or else, you just throw glib words on paper in what should have been a sensible reply to a well thought-out letter. In either case, I find myself wondering what you are doing editing a Letters Page.

Dave Morris, Wandsworth, London: Marc, it is extraordinarily obtuse of you to suppose that reviews serve no function other than to fill up space. I can see how that might be the attitude of staff on magazines like WD, but people who do not work in the gaming hobby do not immediately gain access to every new product that is published, and often the only thing they have to go on is a review. Back-up features in WD are no substitute, because of course they are only concerned with Games Workshop stuff anyway! Candy-floss like *Superpowers*, *Warrior Knights* and *Judge Dredd* are thus 'important enough to deserve heavy coverage', but we get no reviews of *Valley of the Pharoes*(sic), *Swords & Glory* or Palladium's weapons and castles sourcebooks...

The whole discussion about more people entering the hobby has made the assumption that this is a wholly good and desirable thing. Obviously, from a commercial point of view it is important to those who make a living out of the hobby. That applies to me, in fact, but as a *gamer* I find it a matter of supernatural irrelevance whether there are 15,000 or 30,000 people out there buying each new frp product. I mean, this is not a religion where every convert is a soul saved! WD was never more worthwhile than in the Jamie Thomson days when the circulation was less than half what it is now. In place of articles on designing a medieval society or fully-developed fantasy adventures like *Tirandor*, we now have Thrud, ninja, 'snotlings', adolescent parodies of Macbeth and letters on how to swear properly in Mega-City One! Apart from the fact that we are all a mite richer than we used to be, I can't see how the extra 20,000 converts have done this hobby any good.

I dunno. You turn your back for a minute and the hired hands are getting you into all kinds of trouble. OK, OK, Marc's opinions are his own, and he'll never be allowed near the Letters again. The rest of us are much more worried about the perfectly sane types who wander around hitting each other with metal swords, but we won't let it get in the way. Somebody might even be despatched on one of these fun-packed events one day... Would anybody like to nominate a candidate?

Mind you, Marc comes across as a reasonable human being compared to some people. Would all the 20,000 extra readers please put their copies of WD in the bin, since it is obvious that they are not the right sort of people to be allowed to play and enjoy their 'candy-floss' roleplaying games... I don't think it matters what good or ill those new players have done to the hobby; what matters is that they are getting something out of it. The same is true of live roleplaying; some people in the hobby may sneer at what they do, but so long as they have found a niche in the hobby in which they can enjoy themselves, I don't see where anyone has the right to say they shouldn't be allowed that place. It seems funny to me that when we're dealing with games that are supposed to develop free-thinking, some people are becoming more narrow-minded than ever.

The Computer, Alpha Complex: Attention, White Dwarf editor. Once again you pleased The Computer and avoided vapourisation. The treasonous commie mutant scum who perpetrated the *All New Computer Horror Real Action Show* thought to include a subversive map of ILM, but to further confusion and death it was removed. The Computer will be happy for WD to print a blank atlas and guidebook. After all, The Computer is your friend.

Phil Widdows, Kirkham, Lancs: The one responsible for the lay-out of the *All New Computer Horror Real Action Show* is obviously a commie spy and should be terminated at once! How are we supposed to play without the maps?

In exactly the same way, citizen. Various clones have been removed from circulation, but that didn't stop us printing two pages of the Traveller adventure in the wrong order, or replacing Grenadier's advertisement with an old Mail Order ad! If you have noticed the job advertisement elsewhere in this magazine (please let it be there!), don't be fooled. We don't want an editorial assistant, we want a Red level troubleshooter...

N Forkin, Cottingham, N Humberside: Why, in WD81, was the WD subscription form incredibly easy to pull out, fill in and stick through the letter box (after only a minor piece of origami), post free, whilst the Games Day awards questionaire required you to rip great chunks out of your sparkling new WD, and then *pay* for the postage?

Surely something is wrong here? If you want to know what the wide majority of gamers think, surely you should be encouraging them to reply?

And where were you when we did the Readers Poll? If we are going to make any pronouncements about what the 'wide majority of gamers think', that is what they will be based on. Mind you, given that we had about umpty-million replies, it is going to take us some time to sort the answers through. But here, as a taster, are the responses to question 1, based on about two-thirds of the filled-in questionaires:

Section	*Answer*					
	a)	*b)*	*c)*	*d)*	*e)*	*none*
Critical Mass	*657*	*947*	*1363*	*752*	*346*	*24*
	15%	*24%*	*34%*	*19%*	*9%*	
Fracas	*234*	*1005*	*1918*	*649*	*214*	*19*
	6%	*25%*	*48%*	*16%*	*5%*	
2020 Vision	*96*	*497*	*1650*	*1136*	*630*	*30*
	2%	*13%*	*41%*	*28%*	*16%*	
Small Ads	*369*	*1190*	*1980*	*379*	*113*	*8*
	9%	*30%*	*49%*	*9%*	*3%*	
Letters	*600*	*1454*	*1483*	*356*	*135*	*11*
	15%	*36%*	*37%*	*9%*	*3%*	
'Eavy Metal	*1503*	*1225*	*809*	*357*	*143*	*2*
	37%	*30%*	*20%*	*9%*	*4%*	
Gobbledigook	*1793*	*1244*	*578*	*223*	*196*	*5*
	44%	*31%*	*14%*	*6%*	*5%*	
Thrud	*2025*	*1299*	*466*	*162*	*83*	*4*
	50%	*32%*	*12%*	*4%*	*2%*	

If you recall, (a) responses meant the reader really loved the department in question, and (e) responses meant they thought it was awful. By that token, 82% of the readers are Thrud fans, 75% are pro the 'Gook and 67% luv 'Eavy Metal. For the rest, the weight falls on the (c) response, although we're aware of that 15/44 split on the pro/anti 2020 Vision responses. Thrud and 'Gook were the most popular parts of WD in the last Readers Poll too. Of course, there will always be readers who feel strongly about certain pages:

P A Nissen, Arhus, Denmark: I am a very satisfied reader of White Dwarf, but the *Critical Mass* page makes my temper seethe. Obviously, almost nothing is good enough for that pompous fellow, Mr Dave Langford.

In every issue he calls major works of writing something like trash. An example is the Thomas Covenant Chronicles, the best series I ever read - but it wasn't good enough for Mr Langford.

Marvellous pages *'Eavy Metal*. Dear Colin, beware of poisonous fumes from paints, if you use enamel.

By the way, WD81, page 40. This is the place you chaps should send old Maggie for good. We at the local club are breeding plans of making a magic user with a Danish soccer match clap-hat. Imagine that hat provided with an audible glamer spell.

Graeme Bishko, Ealing, London: I would like to point out to readers a few reasons why *Traveller* was, at one time, the best-selling SF rpg, and how those same reasons have forced it out of the best-selling lists. The basic Traveller rules as they originally came out (three small books) were visually unimpressive, and - as a result of this 'underpackaging' (not including any dice or colourful illustrations, for example), the game set was relatively cheap. The rules themselves were patchy, with much detail missing. There was no starter scenario, and the combat system was dreadful. Not a formula for success, you may think.

Wrong! When it came out, the sort of people who played rpgs were those who were prepared to put large effort into their gaming, realising that you only get out what you put in. Subsequently, GDW brought out large amounts of history and background for the game, but they produced relatively few modules, and those they did publish were not of the *D&D* type where everything is done for the GM. This allowed true campaigns to develop, where NPCs could reappear from module to module simply because most - by necessity - were written exclusively for that campaign.

Because of the lack of rules for every situation (though the character generation rules were excellent), a lot of situations had to be judged on the spot. If something unforeseen occured, a referee had to suggest to the players that they had a 20% chance of defusing the bomb (for example), and if they could give a good reason why it should be 50%, then allow a 50% roll. This semi-freeform system made refereeing hard, but satisfying.

The rules for combat were also very brief. The one thing they did show was that combat - even with current earth weapons - was so deadly that it was worth avoiding. Because of this, most players tried to use diplomacy rather than bullets, so the poor combat system was hardly ever used.

These are just a few of the reasons why Traveller has failed completely with the new Fighting Fantasy generation of rpgers. I am not condemning these players, but the fact is that nowadays the games that survive are those with pretty boxes, good artwork and with just about everything done for the players.

That's one view of it, although I doubt if a wonderful combat system and a flashy presentation would have made that much difference... SF gaming is just in the doldrums these days. One thing that interests me about this letter is the assumption that you have to work at this hobby for it to be worthwhile. I'm in no position to say what it feels like to run stuff out of the box, being a campaign GM who loves running deep subplots through a fairly comprehensive background, but I don't find it a hinderance when there is too much information in a game. Many people at Games Day expressed the opinion that games weren't complete enough these days, that pieces were missing. I would resent buying a Roman Empire rpg, to find it had no rules on Legions, and no amount of work would make that 'worthwhile', I'd just feel cheated. Where this leaves Trav, I don't know, but I suspect that anyone who is currently working on an SF rpg is trying hard to give lots of background and an accessible, flexible rules system. If you have a contrary opinion about what makes a good game, this is the place to make it known.

Letters Edited by Paul Cockburn

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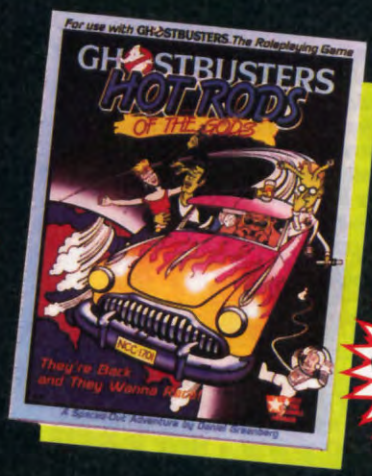

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FRACAS!

GAMES DAY '86

As reported by a bemused Paul Mason

If Games Days can be likened to films, then this year's was *Aliens*. Action-packed, with thrills and horrors aplenty, it certainly drew the crowds. Directed by Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson, the weekend starred Sandy Petersen (designer of *Call of Cthulhu*) as the beleaguered victim of the eldritch tentacled horrors. Sandy was repeatedly forced to confront a motley collection of slimy alien nasties during the weekend, but delivered his lines impeccably. A sample of the great man's wisdom: 'Using dynamite is a sign of failure - unless you're using it properly.'

As ever, the hall contained a large complement of heavily armed warriors. This year, Labyrinthe Live Role-Players had produced a book to explain to a bemused public just what it is that Live Role-Players get up to. Very necessary it was, too, as upstairs, in the mazy networks of Seminar Rooms, Mother Alien Marc Gascoigne was to be found defending his comments about LRPGs in this very magazine. It was all in vain, unfortunately, for some wily young adventurer had found his way to the very top of the building, where the Fanzine Editors were spending the weekend plotting ruin and destruction for all. Asking these vile creatures for aid he was told the Two Arcane Middle Names of Marc Gascoigne, and was able to escape and make his way downstairs in order to Roast the embarrassed Warlock editor on Sunday, along with the various other celebrities.

Biggest crowd-pullers were, of course, Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson, who caused a mass stampede when their signing session was announced. Punters were busy during the whole weekend, though, using the space for autographs thoughtfully included in the programme booklet... More studious types could use the space to make notes in the erudite seminars given by famous game designers like David 'Railway Rivals' Watts and Derek 'Warrior Knights' Carver. Or they could make sketches if the went to the Fantasy Art seminars with the likes of Chris Achilleos.

'Smart guns' of the weekend were definitely Messrs Cockburn and Brunton of White Dwarf (bias? surely not?) who were able to take part in an assortment of events without having their middle names exposed. These talks included discussion on 'The Future of the Hobby'. The verdict? 'Yes, it has one'.

New Products. Well, the boardgame *Warlock of Firetop Mountain* was unleashed upon a suspecting world, and seemed to catch on right away. Also new was *Kings and Things**. If Games Days can be likened to games, then this years was Kings and Things. Action packed, with thrills and horrors aplenty... no, wait, I've done that.

And, and, and... the Games Day Quiz, the Warhammer demonstration (complete with stunning balloon!), the Auction and many other events made this Cert. (18) spectacular the best yet. Look forward to the sequel next year!

Listen carefully, I will say this only once... A casual word of warning. If some foreign chappy comes up to you and goes "'Ere, Mister, want to buy some naughty French toy soldiers...", you should think several times before parting with your money. **Bridge**, a French figure manufacturer, have apparently decided not to bother with housing and feeding any of their own designers by using somebody else's products as their master castings. Of course, if you want to buy (not very good) copies of Citadel figures at higher prices than the originals that is entirely a matter for you. And over here, we've got these really nice used cars...

Ooops and Grovelling Apologies 1: Somebody (mentioning no names) forgot to put a further mention of *Dragonaid* into last month's Fracas. After the success of the last one with £1500 being raised and the D&D marathon record being broken (and equalled by the second team), they're going to do it all over again over Easter 1987 in London. This time there will be another marathon, a games convention and comics. The money raised will go to Help the Aged, Help a London Child and Paramedico. If you think you could help, contact Mike Sharp on 01 245 2967 or Richard Beatty on 01 597 5760.

Ooops and Grovelling Apologies 2: Apart from missing out the maps in the *Paranoia* adventure in WD81 (but really, that kind of information is classified), and managing to stick two pages of the Traveller adventure down in the wrong order (you mean you didn't notice either?) we also managed to leave out a Grenadier advert completely. Ashes and sack-cloth all round, and apologies to Doug Cowie of Grenadier UK Limited for the confusion caused. This issue we'll get everything right. Probably.

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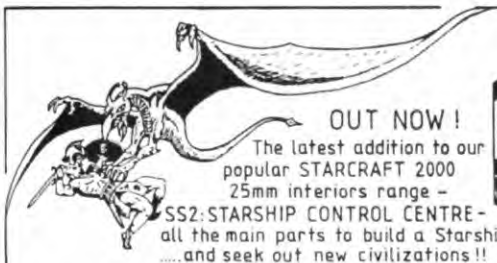

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Swap: D&D Companion/Master level modules CM3 (unused), M1 (unused), M2 for ICE Moria. Contact: Daniel Coffey, Brasenose College, Oxford.

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Games: AD&D, Paranoia, Aftermath, etc.
Time: Every second Sunday 10am-5pm, every Tuesday 6.30-10.30pm
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Contact: Dean Bass, 14 Skeats Wharf, Pennyland, Milton Keynes, MK15 8AY

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Time: Sunday 11am-5pm, but varies
Place: Players' homes
Comments: New games, players, GMs welcome (13+)
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Contact: Garen 312097

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Games: AD&D + any suggestions
Time: to be arranged, once a fortnight
Place: arranged, possible transport
Comments: anyone interested
Contact: Nicko, Leicester (0533) 717003

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New Club
Games: D&D/AD&D
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Contact: Adrian (0722 744130) after 6pm

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Comments: Age 13+
Contact: John 072 54 520

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Place: Players' home
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30c Warrior+Morning Star
30d Warrior + Spear
30e Warrior + Sword & Buckler.

ARMOURED SKELETONS 45p ea.
31a Firing Bow
31b with Spiked Mace
31c with Scythe
31d Spearman
31e with Crossbow.

SKELETONS 2 45p ea.
32a in Studded Armour + Dagger
32b in Chainmail + 2 Handed Sword
32c Robed + Scimitar
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32e in Ragged Robes.

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